Hysterical relations: a comparative study in selected nineteenth-century European narratives

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Hysterical Relations:

A Comparative Study in Selected Nineteenth-Century European Narratives

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THESIS SUMMARY

Hysterical Relations

This study of hysteria is indebted to Freud, and it is equally indebted to certain authors who came before him: Balzac, Charlotte Brontë, Tolstoy, George Eliot, and Florence Nightingale. As particular works of these authors show, the hysteric was a touchstone in cultural and scientific research due to her exemplification, in striking ways, of unconscious internal forces. The interconnectedness of social and psychological issues in the work of Balzac in the 1830s and George Eliot in the 1870s is highlighted, with attention to the degree that all the authors treated inflect Freud's exploration of hysteria in the century's final decades. By moving between European cultural traditions and languages, both in French and in translation, I focus on the overlap between literature and psychology whenever the representation of interpersonal and sexual matters is foregrounded. I intend my use of psychoanalysis to complement a textual analysis in order to emphasize notions like character, choice, fate, and destiny. Within the textual analysis I make conceptual, social, and psychological links to animate that most topical and implicitly hysterical nineteenth-century question: the Woman Question.

I assume that the extent to which hysteria can be understood is the extent to which it can be communicated and read, transcribed from without, in the narrative form which is its bent. Further that the hysteric cannot give expression to desires without the involvement of an intermediary and the provocations of plot. The hysterical question 'Who am I to become?' (man or woman, father or mother, lover or sister) is formulated differently by each of the authors on whose works I draw, being modulated by aesthetic as well as intellectual shifts within the nineteenth century. In the earliest novel I treat, Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet* (1833), a brief blossoming and slow withering of Eugénie's desire for Charles indicates what happens when an implicitly forbidden relation, in this case fraternal love, suffers the blight of its betrayal. Once Charles, initiator and guide of Eugénie's desires, absents himself, Eugénie's love is transformed into a defence against erotic incursions such that youthful love results in resigned melancholy. Charlotte Brontë's protagonist and hysterically unreliable narrator in *Villette* (1853) complains of 'that curse, an over-heated imagination'; a creative malady which results in hallucination, resistance, denial, and evasion, all features of a scenario where accession to desire prompts an elaborate narrative that finally quells the desire which began it.

Tolstoy's early pastoral works attest to the way hysteria, index to a suppressed relation to a primordial loved one, can spill over into consciousness and thence into literature. In his wily *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth* (1852-55) and nostalgic *Family Happiness* (1859) Tolstoy shows how deceptive imaginative powers can be when in thrall to hysterical impulses that fuel it, such that a promising image in fantasy is rendered not just fleeting but illusory. Gwendolen Harleth, a perpetual object of interpretation to Deronda, narrator, and subsequent critics alike, figures the still centre of George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876). The dynamic lure of Eliot's heroine soon dissipates alongside characters who bind themselves to symbolic values - to music, charity, and Judaism, and who thereby avoid the pull of hysterical attachments. Florence Nightingale's *Cassandra* (1860) prompts many more questions than it resolves, yet its significance is multiple: written by a woman who became a nineteenth-century hysteric *par excellence* her impassioned cry against those conditions - psychic, physiological, moral, and social - which circumscribed feminine potential remains a powerful testament to the possibilities and limits of literary discourse.

For all these authors, and for Freud after them, the hysteric was together muse and sacrifice, unsung heroine and dejected sufferer, whose plaint, however encoded, was also a sign of deliverance. 'Words are the most important media by which one man seeks to bring his influence to bear on another; words are a good method of producing mental changes in the person to whom they are addressed' (*SE* 7, p.292). Although these remarks by Freud date from 1890, its premise is shared by each author I evoke, bearing on a dynamism at the core of human relations. To empathize with the hysterical dilemma was not however to identify with it: rather it was to articulate it as a scenario in order to posit one's distance from it. It was this psychological feat, of identifying in order not to identify with the hysteric, which authors and scientists of the nineteenth century collaboratively brought off, thus cutting across divisions of culture and discipline. Above all, it was the ephemeral and fluid aspects of hysteria which provided ongoing stimulus to its representation, a stimulus which, in revised form, continues its pressure up to the present day.

Preface

This study undertakes the close textual analysis of key moments in certain nineteenth-century realist texts, in order to highlight those crises of subjectivity that characterise hysterical relations. The accent is on hysterical relations rather than on hysteria; I take it that hysterical crises of subjectivity are always interpersonal and often intrapsychic; they are communicative acts, even when the one who is being addressed is absent. The orientation of this study is conceptual, and is organised around the figure of the hysteric who embodies crucial tensions of the human psyche. The works chosen are all classic nineteenth-century realist texts, including Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet* of 1833, Tolstoy's pastoral works of the 1850s, and George Eliot's dense *Daniel Deronda* of 1876. A principle focus of the discussion is the ways in which such literary texts can be read as anticipating Freud's work with hysterics toward the end of the century. Within this study I move between French, Russian, and English authors in order to explore how a nascent characterisation of the hysteric is to be found, diffusely, in a collection of European texts. A concentration on close textual analysis is complemented by a psychoanalytic approach which is based on concepts deriving from Freud's early work on hysteria. This comparative method is an enabling one, for through it notions like character, satisfaction, and fate can be explored in a sustained and complex way.

All the concepts in this study are used with an eye to broadening the scope with which hysterical relations can be understood. What Balzac, Charlotte Brontë, Tolstoy, George Eliot, and Florence Nightingale achieve in those of their works analysed here is the successful elaboration of contradictory elements - such as ambivalent feelings - which are a central feature of the hysterical narrative. Each of these writers exploits the idea that at the heart of the psychological crises which they construct in elaborate detail, lies a narrative impulse: from an individual emotional outbreak to a full-scale realist novel with a hysterical heroine or hero at the heart of it. The aim of this study is to capture what it is about particular literary texts that characterises them as hysterical. These features, the unstable textual elements that resist interpretation, are explained by critics in various ways, through biographical, social, and historical detail. Because of the aims of this study these kinds of explanation are not used here, even though they have at certain points proved illuminating. In contrast the generic concept of realism, in the descriptive as well as the classificatory sense, has thrown light on the question of how different authors approximate

psychological truth in their novels. One of the main aspirations of the realist author is to represent accurately perceptions of the inner and outer world, and much can be gained from tracing the successes and failures of this project. This aspiration involves the dramatisation of psychical states that, beginning inside the psyche, go on to complicate the subject's internal and external relations.

These texts have certain structural features which operate as rhetorical tropes. Although Balzac chose to depict Eugénie Grandet's romantic fortunes in a context of provincial isolation, for many readers her fate is automatically related to other romantic heroines immured in the provinces, for instance Pauline in Zola's *La Joie de Vivre*, Balzac's *Ursule Mirouët*, and Francois Mauriac's *Thérèse Desqueyroux*. Interpretations which catch hold of structural features will view these heroines as tokens of a type. Those devices used by the author to make an idea vivid to a reader, without that reader necessarily being aware of the process, are carefully studied. Balzac describes Eugénie Grandet in minute and telling ways; by the time her fortunes slide the reader is primed to draw a very particular meaning from it. The rhetorical ruse is in Balzac's blood: he knows exactly how not to tell of significant details straight out but to convey them as through a keyhole. This occurs when Eugénie spies her father's midnight plunderings, and when the gossiping Madame Cruchot warns Charles of his uncle's sly baseness. As readers of Balzac's novel we too are prejudicial townspeople, there is no vantage from which we might follow the story innocently. At moments, particularly those moments when Balzac gets carried away by his own rhetorical zeal, this power is disconcerting. Enjoyment of Balzac's prose is apt to interfere with clear critical thinking, especially when this author loses his sense of authorial distance to take on the 'voice' of one of his characters. The rhetorical bent of authors as varied as Balzac and Charlotte Brontë is invaluable; through it a sense of drama - fuelled by aspects of the psyche which rely on language and narrative for their representation - is created and sustained. Without it the hysterical narrative would be much barer.

Human experience is poised for its representation in narrative form. Narratological principles, like longing and resistance, are integral to the structuring of representations of experience. The narratological strategies of novels are the analogue of an inherently narrated experience. Psychoanalytic theory provides a range of concepts which construct experience as narrated. It helps explain why the most interesting parts of experience, aspects which account for the abiding fascination of realist novels, are those which resist simple resolutions of theme and plot. Although psychoanalysis cannot be looked to as a literary critical method, through its focus

on narrative mechanisms and psychical transformations it may enrich and foster a critical reading of texts.

The genetic approach to literature, which presumes a necessary relation between the life of the author and the work he or she produces, plays a significant role in opening up realist texts for analysis. For instance Charlotte Brontë's and Tolstoy's life histories may be looked to for telling insights into the real events that play themselves out in a displaced form in their novels. However as an interpretative key it is used but sparely in this study. Ultimately the answers sought for in the analyses that follow are to be located in the texts themselves. It is the words on the page that hold the hysterical narrative together, not secondary sources outside it: the challenge has been to make sense of the literary text as an integrated, free-standing object. Nonetheless the genetic evolution of particular texts is considered. Charlotte Brontë's *The Professor* can be viewed as an early version of *Villette*, and Tolstoy's *The Cossacks* can easily be seen as a companion text to *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth*. Certainly a concern for the genetic looms large in the chapter on Florence Nightingale's *Cassandra*, which shifted its focus enormously after a detailed reading of the original manuscript revealed that the published version is barely recognisable in the manuscript. But finally questions of how the life illuminates the work and how the work comes into its own are put on one side. These are diachronic considerations, whereas the immediate interest of this study lies with synchronic features of the text and in how they appear and operate on the page. The readings of these selected realist novels are close ones; they look in detail at moments and scenes in which the narrative 'turns', and bring into focus what it is about hysterical protagonists that makes them a key to understanding psychological narratives of the nineteenth century.

From a psychoanalytic perspective I assume that the hysteric's enigmatic profile is the consequence of placing the burden of sense on secondary psychical manifestations: on traits, slips, and symptoms which can be understood more properly in relation to primary psychical elements. A method which seeks to focus on primary psychical elements is risky because such elements, hysterical or not, rarely assume explicit conscious forms and have to be inferred, interpreted, from the forms which consciousness gives to them. This interpretation of hysterical relations enjoys, finally, neither the status of science nor the stamp of consensus: it is a strong hypothesis. Just as neither Freud nor Janet could swear by their theoretical formulations, yet believed them to reflect psychical truths, so do I this hypothesis. The central claim is that hysteria expresses an unconscious appeal made to the structuring power of another. The hysteric

projects an intrapsychic conflict between ego and conscience on to an idealised other who then reflects it back in a way that makes this conflict if not acceptable, at least knowable. This hypothesis is distinct from that of Freud's early research which located hysterical conflict between the agencies of ego and id. Hysterical relations are a function of intimacy; the hysterical kernel constitutes that part of a relationship which is enlivened by dispossessed traits of both partners, and it can only be made sense of by examining and reassigning these traits within a context of intimacy, over time.

Jean-Martin Charcot, Hippolyte Bernheim, Pierre Janet, Josef Breuer, and Sigmund Freud were as dependent on the workings of narrative as they were on the context of the clinic. All these researchers were in an important sense narrators: what gave them the edge in the therapeutic context was their position as interlocutor, a position which kept them at a remove from the affective distress of patients. These psychologists were not the only ones to lodge themselves within a coherent subjectivity, or at least in a position to which coherence might be ascribed to their efforts. Nor were they the first to give therapeutic significance to the tracing back of hysterical elements within a context of intimacy. At a profound level both psychologists and authors agree that the prime impetus for human drama lies with an emotional and not a rational determinism of the psyche, and recognise that this impetus is most readily presented in narrative form. Novelists have always known, consciously or not, that the way to convey a narrative which is heavy with affective complexity is to stand imaginatively to one side, the better to convey it. Another claim of this study is that Freud, Balzac, Charlotte Brontë, Tolstoy, and George Eliot were able to elaborate the hysterical position - to illuminate its rifts and paradoxes - by standing back in order to describe it. Although each of these writers conjectured differently they all, as if to resolve equivocal psychical elements in him- or herself, arrived at a model - if only an implicit one - to account for the hysterical position. Further, in so far as each of these writers was motivated to pursue the hysterical thread, he or she was driven from within, responding as to a threat. The psychical dramas which stimulate nineteenth-century realist narratives employ plot, story, affect, and character to drive them. Like the river that for Freud is a metaphor for the wishful and defensive strivings of the psyche, the narratives analysed in the chapters that follow rush forward, and then choke and divide into smaller channels when faced with the stimulus of danger or excitement. The author can be likened to the ego in that control of this narrative flow is always qualified: although both the author and the ego anticipate where it might take them neither can fully gauge where its creative current will take them.

It is not only the nineteenth-century authors called up in this thesis who were aware of the narrative potential of hysterical relations. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) and Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa: or The History of a Young Lady* (1748) are both strong precursors of the surge of hysterical texts published in the following century. The nineteenth century provides a background to this study because of the implicit overlap between literary and psychological projects during this period. In seeking to comprehend the hysterical dilemma psychological researchers and literary writers shared the same model - that of the hysteric. Even though Balzac attempts to understand all manner of things in *La Comédie humaine* (1827-47), not least is his exploration of the hysterical relations which more often than not bind his central characters fatefully, and often fatally, together. In *Le lys dans la vallée* (1836) there can be no doubt that Madame de Mortsauf dies of her hysterical attachment to the narrator Félix, nor that Bette's vociferous meddlings in *La Cousine Bette* (1847) are hysterically inspired. The success of famous realist authors can in part be explained by their consummate handling of hysterical relations between central characters. My choice of protagonists is selective and far from exhaustive, and could well have included Jane Eyre and Mr Rochester in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Romola and Savonarola in George Eliot's *Romola* (1863), Adam Bede and Dinah Morris in *Adam Bede* (1859), Natasha Rostov and Pierre Bezuhov in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1863-69), Pauline and Lazare in Zola's *La Joie de Vivre* (1883), Jeanne and Julien in Maupassant's *Une Vie* (1883), and Isabel Archer and Gilbert Osmond in Henry James's *A Portrait of a Lady* (1881). What these potential readings suggest is that the approach followed in this study could, in offering a reinterpretation of key realist texts, contribute to further work in the field of literary criticism.

The psychological project in the nineteenth century runs alongside that of narrative realism. Many psychologists who treated hysterical patients in this period chose to work through their unique relations of intimacy in the narrative form of case history. Freud's remark that his case histories read like short stories is famous, yet Pierre Janet's sometimes life-long correspondence with hysterical ex-patients - in which he kept up his interest in the plots of their lives - is no less telling. This similarity, between the aims of literature and the aims of the therapeutic, should not be skimmed. What the narrative impulse encouraged, whether literary or clinical in form, was the discovery of areas of consciousness that might otherwise be left unelaborated. On the one side is the hysterical patient or literary protagonist who is characterized by his or her inability to articulate that which is hinted at through speech or symptom; on the other is the author or psychological researcher who, in overcoming certain resistances, is able to present aspects of the psyche that

become available to consciousness through the stimulus of narrative. The peculiarity of any hysterical treatment is that it implicates the therapist; equally the peculiarity of any hysterical narrative is that it implicates the author. The French psychologist Pierre Janet assumes in his work with hysterics that it is a dissociation of ideas from consciousness, for him the mark of a neurotic cast of mind, which causes a hysterical disturbance in the psyche. Sigmund Freud, whose early research with Breuer rivalled that of Janet's, suggests the reverse: not that it is the dissociation of ideas from consciousness that causes a hysterical breakdown but rather that it is a hysterical breakdown that causes certain ideas to be repressed from consciousness. What Freud went on to demonstrate was how the effect of his physical person, as a representative of absent loved ones important to the patient, was responsible for the hysterical dissociation of particular ideas from consciousness.

Much critical attention has been given to the fact that Freud 'changed his mind' over the place of seduction in the hysterical trauma. For some critics this change has the status of a watershed: either Freud covered up the importance of an event so widespread that his own paternity was queried, a view put forward by Jeffrey Masson and others, or Freud experienced a theoretical revolution which had the effect of putting sexual fantasy at the centre of every clinical formulation. My view, which is supported by Philip Rieff in *Freud: The Mind of the Moralist* (1959) and *Freud* (1973), John Forrester in *Language and the Origins of Psychoanalysis* (1980), and in the writings of Jean Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, is that the impact of the seduction theory for the study of hysteria has been exaggerated. The focus of Masson and others on the controversy surrounding conflicting historical material and empirical data, is a focus which puts the psychical significance of seduction into shadow. In itself no event, but a series of imaginative moments, seduction signifies the unthinkable enjoyment of something which only enters individual consciousness disguisedly. If the child positively knows that seduction has taken place then no trauma, particularly of a hysterical nature, can possibly follow. It is the excitement of which the subject is unaware, except displacedly, that results in hysteria. Hysteria is triggered by the retrospective operation of memories, specifically by the libidinal constructions which are cast over the memory image of a real event: it is never the simple result of being sexually 'done to' by another. In the matter of hysteria there is always an imaginatively collusive tie. Unlike other psychoanalytically-inspired critics, instead of giving the key to an understanding of hysteria to the seduction theory, in this study it is placed over a decade later in relation to the Oedipus complex. This choice assumes that hysteria is best understood in relation to the prolonged working through of a narrative impulse which is triggered by family relations. Although the effect of a passive

hysterical trauma which takes the form of waiting to and wanting to be done to by another cannot be underestimated, the opposite excitement is just as powerfully at work in the child's desire to implicate him- or herself in the lives of intimates. This dovetailing of passive and active wishes, which Freud interprets as sexual in the broadest sense, explains my use of Freud as a source for this study. Although the work of Charcot, Bernheim, Breuer, and Janet is compelling, their research fails to supply an explicit schema which makes sense of the neurotic disposition as constituted by family-inspired narratives.

Although an interest in Freud's early work is essential to this study, the real fidelity lies not with Freud's collected works but with the conceptual problems he undertook to elaborate and theorise. It is Freud's persistent claim that the efficacy of metapsychological schemas relies on their continuous overhaul; further that the real impetus for the psychoanalytic enterprise lies not with consolidation at the level of theory but with the tackling of psychical phenomena in whatever form they surface, with whatever formulations facilitate their treatment. In this study an initial concentration on early psychoanalytic writings led to a growing interest in the non-pathological side of the neuroses. Specifically in what happens when the secondary defences of the hysteric do not break down to manifest in neurosis, but instead are borne out in character traits and personal relations. One further response to the theory of psychoanalysis involved a turning towards literature, not only as a source of sophisticated scenarios based on the family, but also as a spur for close readings that could bring to light - with sometimes extraordinary lucidity - the mechanisms of wish and defence which organize the hysterical structure. It was this discovery of literary texts as a fertile source that lies behind the selection of key psychoanalytic terms, which are worked up into conceptual terms that build upon but aim to go beyond the meanings Freud and others assign to them: satisfaction, destiny, excitement, dread, longing, and resistance.

La Comédie humaine is in many ways a far richer resource for textual analysis than Freud and Breuer's *Studies on Hysteria*, in that it offers abundant and finely-honed material which begs interpretation, thus giving the critic an active and responsible role. I respond to the realist texts under analysis on conscious and unconscious levels. The texts that have been excluded to arrive at the textual analyses that appear in the following chapters have left no trace. The final choice reflects a decision to analyse texts that illustrate features vital to an understanding of hysterical relations. The study of Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet* looks at the way in which a fraternally idealised lover can explain a heroine's passage from adolescent hysteria to mature melancholy. The reading of Brontë's *Villette* shows how the precocious ambivalence the narrator directs on to intimates

forces her into a series of hysterical positions. A close analysis of key scenes in Tolstoy's early pastoral writings identifies those moments when the hystericization of the narrator pushes him or her to project fantasies of satisfaction and dread on to surrounding characters; the analysis of George Eliot's strenuous *Daniel Deronda* focuses on crucial scenes and monologues which dramatise an internal drama of hysterical dimensions. And Florence Nightingale's *Cassandra* is probed for the hysterical fissures which, in the published version, are covered over so as to be presented as a social tract.

Even though the framework of the nineteenth century provides a chronological structure in this study, within it the historical perspective plays a role subordinate to the psychical. There is no simple historical or material determinism that can explain the workings of hysteria. Certainly such an approach, as borne out by critics such as Ilza Veith, Roy Porter, and Elaine Showalter, goes a long way toward explaining the secondary manifestations of a neurosis that changes its spots in line with social changes. But an analysis of secondary determinants - however convincing as explanations they may be (and many of them are) - tends to put to one side the internal workings of the psyche. These workings, which create the affects and ideas that are channelled into neurotic traits, slips, and symptoms, are of prime interest in this study. An important presupposition is that the hysterical mechanism is set up within the psyche in order to counter conflicting perceptions of excitement and danger from without and within. Freud claims that neurosis is a secondary defence with an inverse gain, a claim which suggests that neurosis, through its ability to relieve the neurotic subject of primary unpleasure, is on a secondary level a success. The enigma of hysteria is not that it comes about but that it should break down as a psychical organisation which gives an otherwise distressed subject real benefits. Hysteria is a paradox: it is a way of organising and thus making sense of stimuli otherwise lost to awareness. As soon as this stimuli enters awareness, as a result of the dissolution of psychical defences, it has the effect of inviting - indeed begging - the interpretation of others. The hysteric makes an appeal that she outwardly denies, a contradiction which helps to explain her popularity as a heroine in literary texts and as a subject in psychoanalysis.

Rather than focusing on the social, historical, and etymological dimensions of hysteria I have attended to its psychical and specifically intrapsychical aspects. I have supposed from the outset that the hysteric does her thinking on behalf of a special yet unassignable other. This designation, as hallowed as it is vague, does not single out a mere loved object but a loving other, who has powers to make and cohere an existence the hysteric might otherwise disown - her own.

For the powers of thought are, as Freud suggests, both wondrous and fearful. The power to think, to connect and frame ideas and images, is linked to the ability to choose and invest specific objects with love. Through reading in turn the early Freud papers and nineteenth-century literary texts it has been possible to recognise that the hysteric is as afraid of thinking as she is afraid of loving; moreover, the hysteric is quick to defend against that which, unknown to others, interests her most. Such fears are founded: the wish to harm that which is consistently loving risks grave consequences. Yet in this the hysteric is precipitous, in that these consequences escalate to the degree they are imaginatively enacted in the hysterical scenario. Such thoughts are as dramatic as the phallic impulses which compel them; within this scenario only the best and worst youthful wishes are realized. The hysterical suppression of such thoughts and fantasies is necessarily short-lived, all it can offer is a temporary respite from the clashes between will and desire which inevitably emerge on reaching sexual maturity. It is these tensions, along with the narratives they have the potential to shape, that are analysed in this study. The readings that follow aim to show how the figure of the hysteric upsets realist narratives while at the same time, at a less obvious level, explains our interest in them.

Figure 1: Martha Bernays at the time of her engagement to Sigmund Freud (c.1883)

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CHAPTER ONE

Hysterical Relations: Complex(i)ties

> Your lovely photograph. At first, when I had the original in front of me I did not think so much of it; but now, the more I stare at it the more it resembles the loved object; I expect the pale cheeks to flush the colour our roses were, the delicate arms to detach themselves from the surface and seize my hand; but the precious picture does not move, it just seems to say: Patience! Patience! I am but a symbol, a shadow cast on paper, the real person is going to return and then you may neglect me once again.1

In this letter, the first Freud addressed to his betrothed in 1882, an imperceptible movement in which libidinal feelings and fantasies come to invest the image of the loved one, may be traced. In it, the impact of absence and of time passing, culminating in affects of longing to which the lover is prey, animate the visage of Martha Bernays; yet despite the viewer's teasing the dumb image refuses to come alive imaginatively and to incite sexual pleasure. Instead, in a reflexive move, it acts to chasten his creative whimsy. In this vacillation, between an unflinching photographic image and a lover's persistent desire to invigorate it, lies Freud's main psychical insight: 'Reality - wish fulfilment - it is from these opposites that our mental life springs'.[2] The idea that one's representation of reality is primed by underlying impulses, wishfully conferred on to perceptions gleaned by the psychical apparatus, is a formative one in Freud's research of the final decades of the nineteenth century. During this period much attention is given to the psychical tension that arises between impulses of wish, fantasy, and imagination, and to those processes which restrain them - thought, mastery, and memory. The symbolic lure of 'a shadow cast on paper', whether this takes the form of a photograph mounted in a frame or, metaphorically, a heroine depicted in a novel, fuels this tension by animating conscious and unconscious impulses in the perceiver. The effect of this animation is to bring a photographic image to life in a similar way that a literary character is brought to life; through imbuing 'the precious object [that] does not move' with ideas and feelings which lift a flat vignette in to imaginative awareness. In his fervent letters to Martha Bernays, Freud is not knowingly creative or literary, none the less in communicating the yearnings his fiancée's image provokes, he becomes - if only for a moment - an inspired author.

A contrastive tension between imagination and reason is nowhere more apparent than the psychoanalytic formulation of hysteria in the nineteenth century, an enquiry which centres on the

representability of woman in the symbolic domain. A striking feature of this debate is the significance of 'the woman' as a stimulus to thought; a feature which connects with Freud's suggestion in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1905) that all thinking is prompted by a wish for a desired object (*SE* 5, p.602). This tendency, through which the imaginative vision of a loved one induces intense thought in the lover, becomes explicit in Freud's further admission to Martha - after his call for 'Patience!' - that he can find no resting place for her photograph:

> I would like so much to give the picture a place among my household gods that hang above my desk, but while I can display the severe faces of the men I revere, the delicate face of the girl I have to hide and lock away. It lies in your little box and I hardly dare confess how often during the past twenty-four hours I have locked my door and taken it out to refresh my memory.3

Evidently there are covert reasons why satisfaction of the impulse to display permanently the beloved must be thwarted and, besides, why the lover's memory can never be refreshed enough. Seemingly greater pleasure is to be gained by distancing the fiancée's picture from images of the lover's revered fathers: as if the face of the fiancée may be enjoyed by the lover to the degree it is hidden from the lover's direct sight. Imaginative possession of the beloved is thus doubly charged: by the importunate absence of the photograph's model, and by the '*fort/da*' quality with which the fiancé invests his memento. The impulse to lock the loved image away, so as to profit more keenly from its safekeeping, will emerge, in the unfolding of Freud's psychoanalytic theory, as one of the main constituents of fantasy, and in particular the hysterical fantasy. The fine mesh of fantasy is conservative; serving to protect the image of the loved one from the wearing effects of reality, it fosters an imaginative universe removed from material constraints. A compulsive element of the lover's furtive pleasure, which a psychoanalytic understanding of fantasy will attribute to the tremors of autoerotism, is also manifest in this behaviour. Mention of the fiancée's 'little box', as well as the nocturnal hours in which the lover suffers wakefulness, confirms such a reading - as does his equivocal action of getting the picture out and locking it away. All these actions hint at the central paradox of hysterical relations, in which a lover's maturely chosen loved object is unsettled by an 'incompatibility' between conscious and unconscious domains; by a psychical arrangement which, reflecting an originary choice, is all too compatible.

By the turn of the century, Freud will claim that no fantasy is innocent and that even the desire to know, curiosity, develops from impulses which initially seek to absorb and possess the wished-for object. Only after repeated absences of the originally desired object does the form of the object, usually the mother, emerge from discontinuous perceptual images which characterize the workings the infant's psyche. During this phase the concept of loss, embracing idea and

affect, and having 'always already' occurred, becomes entwined in an infinitely elaborated circuit. Omnipotent control of the loved one, a feature of the infant's earliest dealings with objects, may also elicit spontaneous fears of catastrophe whenever the object on which the infant unconditionally depends is absent for long periods. The psychical fate of early loves, however inevitable in regard to demands of reality, leaves permanent traces. These experiences link impulse and memory-image to the traces of a libidinal satisfaction which is as impossible to re-evoke as it is yearned for; creating a nostalgia, powerful yet fleeting, founded in childhood. After identifying the originally desired object as the mother, Freud surmised that a backward movement characterizes the operation of memory whenever it is tinged with Eros. In *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, Freud claims that 'in being in love with one's own mother one is never concerned with her as she is in the present but with her youthful mnemic [memory] image carried over from one's childhood' (*SE* 6, p.178). It would appear - as exemplified in Freud's letter to Martha - that the effect of putting an image of a contemporary beloved in the place of a primordial loved one can spark a hysterical confusion, mixing satisfaction and shame, in the perceiver's mind. The forbidden aspect of such substitutions, however unseemly, Freud none the less deems psychically necessary if one is to sustain a vigorous sexuality. Even more pointedly, in 'Contributions to the Psychology of Love', he declares that 'anyone who is to be really free and happy in love must have surmounted his respect for women and have come to terms with the idea of incest with his mother or sister' (*SE* 11, p.186). These insights cut both ways: the woman too, in so far as she is subject to a negative Oedipus complex which attracts her to the mother, must reckon with and overcome incestuous and conservative impulses. Yet a complication in this latter case arises; for the woman must not only overcome, like the man, her 'respect for woman', but must reconcile herself with its effects in terms of existing feminine identifications.

That the aspiration 'to be really free and happy in love' is to be understood more as an ideal than as a realizable expectation, is confirmed by Freud's own resistance to the revelations of the Oedipus complex; specifically by the opposition that consciousness emits when faced with family truths. The initial purpose of fantasy, which is to avoid conflicting family scenarios while spinning a web of pleasing asides on these very themes, is preliminary to the role of narrative which positions itself in a hinterland between fantasy and reality. The child's forays into narrative, takes place on the Oedipal threshold, and their immediate purpose is dual: to soften exigent impulses by the imaginative clothing of them, and to mask the distance between wishful satisfactions and those satisfactions that are achieved in reality. The realm of fantasy, which Freud describes as 'that half-way region interpolated between life in accordance with the pleasure principle and life in

accordance with the reality principle', gains in sophistication through its organization in infantile narratives (*SE* 12, p.252). It is the aim of these narratives to master stimuli which are experienced, from the infant's position, on a continuum from all-powerfulness to helplessness. These infantile narratives or 'unconscious fictions', explore and extend psychical awareness; operating as a bridge between primary and secondary processes they establish lasting links - which in the 'Project for a Scientific Psychology' (1895) Freud calls 'facilitations' - to insure against sudden incursions of stimuli (*SE* 1, pp.306-07).

Freud draws attention to this capacity in the same letter to his betrothed of three days, picking up where the last quotation from it left off:

> And all the while I kept thinking that somewhere I had read about a man who carried his sweetheart about him in a little box, and having racked my brain for a long time I realised that it must be 'The New Melusina', the fairy tale in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Wanderings*, which I remembered only vaguely. For the first time in years I took down the book and found my suspicion confirmed. But I found more than I was looking for. The most tantalising, superficial allusions kept appearing here and there, behind the story's every feature lurked a reference to ourselves, and when I remembered what store my girl sets by my being taller than she is I had to throw the book away, half-amused, half-annoyed, and comfort myself with the thought that my Martha is not a mermaid but a lovely human being.4

The tendency for wishful stories, fantasies, to be provoked by a memory in the past, consciously elaborated in the present, and then projected into a wishful future, is captured in this lover's dilatory yet motivated search for a satisfaction which is prompted by a youthful recollection. When the lover candidly admits to finding 'more than I was looking for', he points to the uncontrollable nature of the narrative process as soon as it is touched by idea and feeling: specifically to the way it acts simultaneously on words on the page and on conscious and unconscious memory-traces stimulated by those words. In Goethe's tale the mythical encapsulation of a loved one in a box, recalled by Freud's uncertain regard for Martha's picture, corresponds to the common childhood fantasy of subsuming the loved object in the person of the lover: at once of swallowing and of retaining the delectable sweetheart. The embarrassment these ideas engender in the mature Freud credits this interpretation, causing him to dissociate himself from the egoism and shame his fantasy inspires and at the same time to vent his frustration through mock anger. This behaviour confirms a description of waking fancy that Freud offers fifteen years later in 'Hysterical Phantasies and their Relation to Bisexuality' (1908): 'These day-dreams are cathected with a large amount of interest; they are carefully cherished by the subject and usually concealed with a great deal of sensitivity, as though they were among the most intimate possessions of his personality' (*SE* 9, p.160). Initially manifest in covert libidinal operations of the psyche, hysterical fantasies emerge as a permanent feature of the psyche only when the secrecy and the excitement which characterize

mature thought process begin to operate.

Freud's emphasis on the imagination as a unique source of psychical energy and a potential carrier for neurosis is crucial to any study of literary creativity. It involves a move away from a medical model of pathogenesis, originating in bodily lesions, to a concept of neurosis which encompasses the imaginative propensities of the psyche. Within the infant's world it is the aim of fantasy to liberate the infant from potentially unbearable aspects of experience; as such it tends toward the neurotic only when a dependence on fantasy shields the infant from an unaccommodating reality. In Florence Nightingale's *Cassandra*, the heroine refers to the 'torture of wandering 'vain imaginations': an allusion which locates the source of hysterical suffering within the creative psyche, rather than attributing it, as the ancients did, to a 'wandering womb'.[5] This hysterical anguish is, Nightingale's heroine asserts, the young woman's 'phantom companion'. As a result of this yearning, young women 'seek a companion for their every thought, the companion they find not in reality they seek in fancy or, if not that, if not absorbed in endless conversations, they see themselves engaged with him in stirring events, circumstances which call out the interest wanting to them'.[6] These 'stirring events' and 'endless conversations' are stimulated from within the psyche through the imagination. Such 'phantom' companions can never, any more than Goethe's Melusine or Freud's 'shadow cast on paper', be found in reality. The product of waking fancies which begin with infancy, the scenarios in which these phantoms appear are later denounced, by both the betrothed Freud and Nightingale's heroine, for their origins in self-pleasure.

To introduce the concept of hysteria through the play of masturbatory activity, as it is extrapolated from psychical fantasy, is to propose a generic base for the conundrum of the neuroses. Neurosis might be described as a delayed response to an unwelcome onrush of psychical energy, held in abeyance by defence. It contrasts with a normal subjectivity which depends on the adequate absorption of a psychical object, inflected with parental traits, set up within to aid the workings of conscience and ideals. In 'Family Romances' (1909) this operation, on which the individual's traversal of the 'half-way region' of fantasy rests, plays a role more crucial than the physical hurdles of development by which maturity is often measured:

> The liberation of an individual, as he grows up, from the authority of his parents is one of the most necessary though one of the most painful results brought about by the course of his development. It is quite essential that liberation should occur and it may be presumed that it has been to some degree achieved by everyone who has reached a normal state. (*SE* 9, p.237)

It is achievement of this professedly 'normal state' which informs Freud's first dealings with those

neurotics, predominantly hysterics, whose treatment is premised on their failure to attain it. Throughout Freud's research into the psychical mechanisms of the neurotic, a continuous thread connecting sexuality and the imagination can be detected. Analogous to the discovery of the object which is always a refinding, Freud's study of hysterical processes was sketched hypothetically in the 1880s and then clinically 'discovered', or more properly confirmed, in the latter 1880s and the 1890s. Starting from the claim that psychosexual development operates independently of genetic makeup, Freud increasingly assumed that what holds true for one sex might equally hold true for the other, at least in initial phases. Freud was convinced this thesis was 'badly received', when he presented it in 'On Male Hysteria' to members of the Vienna Medical Society in 1886, a perception which appears to have prompted him into a species of intellectual exile for over a decade.[7] Whatever the content of this untraceable paper, Freud's autobiographical recall of its reception is itself hysterical: in it he embellishes an unenthusiastic reception of his views with affects of hysterical reminiscence, and hence believes his 'enlightened' views of hysteria in the male are received with the same indifference as a speech by Cassandra.

Over twenty years after Freud's first letter to Martha Bernays and this controversial paper on male hysteria, Freud responded to a discussion at the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society about Bleuler's work with sexual abnormalities in children. His response, recorded by the Society's secretary, concentrates on the impact of autoerotic pleasure on the psyche:

> Personally, Freud is more and more inclined toward the view that it is not masturbation that - as the patients assert - is the source of all these neurotic sufferings; the essential factor is what lies behind masturbation - namely, the primitive masturbation-fantasies. For these are not suppressed along with the suppression of physical masturbation; with the accumulation of libido their effects are all the stronger. Neurotics are persons who in fantasy have not arrived at a detachment from their first objects; and it is from this *content of the primitive fantasies* that all these feelings of repression follow. For persons who can detach these fantasies from father, mother, etc., masturbation has no psychological consequences. They also make an early transition to real objects. 8

It is not the masturbatory act but rather those fantasies motivating it which, subject to defence, carry neurotic potential. Neurosis results when masturbatory activities are not autoerotic enough; so that, after the repression of autoerotism in latency, subjective fantasies remain bound up with their stimulants, the parental figures. Moreover it is not the parents themselves so much as the imaginative complexes deriving from them, which promote masturbation-fantasies. Freud's comments, dating from 1910, also suggest that the onus for neurotic conflict is determined less by the cumulative pressure of drives, a largely quantitative or economic factor, than by the degree of flexibility these psychical drives display. This flexibility ensures the release of early loved ones

from the operation of fantasy and enables the libidinal energy it sets free to be transferred on to legitimate objects of sexual interest. Above all, it is failure to effect a shift from an investment in a primordial 'one' to a host of possible others, that Freud notes for its hysterical potential. Continuing to record the Society's discussion of 'bad habits' in children, the secretary notes:

> Thus the harmfulness of masturbation goes back to the incompatibility of the first object choice. If Bleuler believes that childhood masturbation (4-5 years) can be overlooked, he is mistaken. In normal children, to be sure, it soon disappears. On the other hand, Freud considers the statement to be altogether correct that certain individuals have a repugnance toward the masturbation they have practiced until then; suddenly, and independently of external influences, it becomes impossible for them to masturbate. This moment marks the turning point in their development. Shortly after, hysteria usually sets in.9

The first object choice is characterized by its 'incompatibility'; an attribute which, if not offset by vigorous psychical drives, prevents the liberation of the child from the influence or the authority of parents. It is then a conflict at the level of imagination and idea which launches the neurotic career. Only the functioning of early intelligence, fuelled by the energy loosened from parental complexes, may consciously defend against an ultimate and for that reason suppressed aim of sexual consummation with parent or sibling.

A turning point in Freud's early psychoanalytic research lies in a focus on the hysterical masturbation-fantasies. First perceived as a repudiation of sexual ideas, brought on by a conflict between the satisfactions of impulse and the demands of conscience, the phenomenon of hysteria will from 1900 onwards - and reaching a climax in *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (1905) - be related to a persistence of archaic object choices in these fantasies. The phenomenon of sexual pleasure began to dominate Freud's research into hysterical symptoms as soon as it became evident that it is only through a confluence of libidinal impulse and constraining ideals that neurosis comes to disturb consciousness. Although critical of the ideas of psychic degeneracy fostered by French colleagues, particularly the masterful Jean-Martin Charcot and Pierre Janet after him, Freud none the less attended to relational and social factors which frame any presentation of neurotic misery. In his closing remarks to the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, on the connection between the renunciation of masturbation and the onset of hysteria, Freud points to these broader issues:

> To find out what makes it impossible [for them - hysterics - to masturbate], one has to enter more deeply into the matter. It is probably a faint recognition of the *social* significance of love relationships and of the responsibilities that result from them. Thus the impossibility [of masturbation] seems to be connected with a step forward on the way to the finding of an object.10

To understand the effects of a suppression of masturbatory activity and a burgeoning of hysterical fantasy, is also to comprehend the conscious steps by which a loved object is satisfactorily

acquired. A premature concern for the bearing of one's pleasures on others is itself conducive to neurosis. Although such dilemmas could be elaborated clinically at the level of sexual dysfunction, Freud soon acknowledged that the problems underlying them encroach on normal psychological processes. Freud's identification of psychoneurotic mechanisms increasingly draw on sources outside the medical domain: areas in philosophy and the arts that reach as far back as hysteria's 'conception' in ancient times.[11]

There are two discrete periods in Freud's study of hysteria: from the mid-1880s to the end of the century, and from the beginning of the next century until his radical review of the unpleasure-pleasure principle in 1914. Before 1900 the main principle of hysteria is economic; whenever the ego is caught unawares by a premature release of (sexual) unpleasure, it is powerless to effect the inhibitions that would guard against a further breach of the psyche, and instead it releases a hysterical discharge. In a draft enclosed to Fliess in 1896, Freud explains:

> Hysteria begins with the overwhelming of the ego [...]. The raising of tension at the primary experience of unpleasure is so great that the ego does not resist it and forms no psychic symptom but is obliged to allow a manifestation of discharge - usually an excessive expression of excitation[...]. Repression and the formation of defensive symptoms only occur subsequently, in connection with the memory; and after that *defence* and *overwhelming* (that is, the formation of symptoms and the outbreak of attacks) may be combined to any extent in hysteria. (*Freud/Fliess*, p.169)

Once disturbing impulses and the memory-traces linked to them are dispatched from consciousness, whatever remains associated with them in consciousness risks setting off a further onrush of hysterical unpleasure. The second principle of hysteria of this early period involves the binary operation of hysterical repression, which means that memories are reproduced according to a diphasic onset of sexuality and, as a result, neutral childhood experiences are coated with an intensity of sexual interest appropriate to puberty.

In a letter to Fliess in 1896, Freud writes that: 'the arousal in a later epoch of a sexual memory from an earlier one produces a *surplus of sexuality* in the psyche, which operates as an inhibitor of thought and gives the memory and its consequences an obsessive character - uninhibitability' (*Freud/Fliess*, p.187). The compounding of sexual excess and psychical defence has a singular outcome: the prevention of specific experiences being translated into words. The hysterical symptom is memorial to impounded affects, and as such is contingently related to the event which triggers it: 'the nature of the scene is of importance insofar as it is able to give rise to defence' (*Freud/Fliess*, p.188). However reactive the hysterical defence would might seem, the motivation behind all hysterical products - including attacks, actions, fantasies, and amnesias - is ultimately

educible to the projection of wishful impulses on to a mythical, deified other:

> A hysterical attack is not a discharge but an *action*; and it retains the original characteristic of every action - of being a means to the reproduction of pleasure [...]. Attacks of dizziness and fits of weeping - all these [actions] are aimed at *another person* - but mostly at the prehistoric, unforgettable other person who is never equaled by anyone later. (*Freud/Fliess*, pp.212-13)

Although Freud never clarified the identity of this incomparable other one may assume it is constructed during early ventures into fantasy during which a pleasing and loving other is created - an impulse which may well explain the hysteric's ineluctable urge to return to it.

Freud's first formulation of hysteria rests on the erection of a primary defence, triggered by a rush of stimuli which enters the ego as if from behind, from where the psychical mechanism of attention least expects it. Three related elements are involved: psychical trauma, affective conflict, and sexual disturbance; and its treatment is based on a medical model which straddles physical and mental therapies. The enigma of an affective response, in excess of any ideational prompt, proved a hindrance to even the most painstaking of psychical treatments; and yet this hindrance, expressed as longing and resistance, would at a later stage provide the basis of all neurotic treatment. This insight into the workings of the psyche was not easily gained; however benignly the therapeutic couple returned to the offending scene or scenes a compulsive element, an 'uninhibitability', upset the patient's recounting of apparently innocent events. In the 'Project for a Scientific Psychology', Freud accounts for the oddity of memories that have been invested with affect: affective memories take longer to bring within the ego's cathexes because of their strong association to the automatic discharge of unpleasure, and consequently it takes repeated attempts at binding to bring them into consciousness (*SE* 1, p.381). In order to curb this automatic discharge of unpleasure, the ego erects a hysterical defence against excitation which wells up within. This arrangement suits an ego bent on maintaining control, and its severity reflects the extent a primary defence once failed. The experience of helplessness, which underlies the hysterical ego's determination to regulate libidinal flow, points to a momentary loss of memory, referred to by Freud in the 'Project' as 'a gap in the psyche', to which the hysteric involuntarily returns in later attacks (*Freud/Fliess* p.169). It is such attacks which Lucy Snowe in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, Nicholas Irtenyev in Tolstoy's *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth*, and Gwendolen Harleth in George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* are all portrayed as suffering, during precise moments when the psyche loosens its hold over the workings of consciousness. Because this originary overwhelming experience is characterized as passive, occurring in infancy, Freud declares it feminine: hence its link with hysteria. In correspondence to Fliess in 1896, Freud writes: 'hysteria presupposes a primary experience of unpleasure - that of a passive nature. The natural sexual passivity of women explains their being more inclined to hysteria (*Freud/Fliess*, p.169). The

hysteric suffers from passive reminiscences which refuse to return actively as memories; protected by the unconscious they remain pristine, organized, vigorous - and largely disconnected. Nevertheless Freud stressed, in contradistinction to colleagues in the field such as Pierre Janet, that all hysterical disturbances are the consequence of a dissociation of conflictual ideas from consciousness, and do not constitute its cause (*SE* 2, p.104).

Through research undertaken in the 1880s and 1890s, Freud came to assume that memories of infancy become hysterically traumatic with hindsight: what originally registers as a memory-trace is only repudiated once sexuality and ideals come to work antithetically, in mutual disregard in puberty and adolescence. The hysteric suffers from a heightening of this retroactive mechanism, which causes her to attend to the regulatory safeguards of the ego with greater zeal than to interests of pleasure. This produces a state of alert which, complicated by defence, culminates in neurosis: to a lessening of the ego's capacity to deal with sexual tension and relational conflict. As secondary defences form in support of weakened primary defences, the hysterical neurosis, conceived as a libidinal safeguard against an unwelcome insurgence of stimuli, settles into a network of defences against whatever reminds the ego of its earlier breakdown - foremost the representatives of Eros and pleasure. In hysteria a sophisticated structure of hysterical denial comes to obscure the desires which underlie it. This neurotic movement, from an initial response to insurgent impulses, to a defensive reaction against all libidinal impulses, shifted the psychoanalytic focus away from the content of repressed memories and toward those mechanisms whose job it is to keep them in a repressed state. At the heart of these defensive mechanisms are the '*proton pseudos*', elements of hysterical deceit which blanket the original memory with a later scene, and thus conceal the sexual link which unites them (*SE* 1, pp.552-59). It is a clash between memory-traces of wishful satisfactions and ideals that exhibit more exacting standards, which results in hysterical repression. Its effect is to invest other memory-traces with apparently neutral content so as to represent the continuing interest of banished impulses in consciousness. This displaced excitement creates the unrest so characteristic of hysteria, and it accounts for those episodes in literary narratives which exhibit elements of 'uninhibitability'.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Freud developed the view that sexual satisfaction is intimately connected to unconscious fantasy, to minute constructions which lure somatic sexual excitation through the realm of psychosexual ideas, and reach a climax in specific actions which relieve the psyche of accumulated tension. However in psyches characterized by hysterical

anxiety Freud perceived a complication, whereby 'for several reasons the psychic linkage offered to it remains insufficient: a *sexual affect* cannot be formed, because there is something lacking in the psychic determinants' (*Freud/Fliess*, pp.80-81). It would seem that whatever hinders the functioning of the psychosexual representatives, also hinders the symbolizing and structuring role of fantasy. In hysterical repression the withholding of voluptuous feelings from the psychosexual group of ideas, leads to an arrest of psychic activity, to the issue of anxiety and disgust, and their concomitants depression and shame. Devoid of conscious masturbatory fantasies, the hysterical elaboration of sexual ideas during puberty becomes coloured by apprehension rather than by anticipatory longings of libidinal excitement. Nevertheless Freud remained adamant during this period that, despite appearances to the contrary, hysterical fears are always tokens of previously repressed wishes.

In line with the idea that hysterical utterances may be identified by mechanisms of memory instead of their content, Freud realized that repression acts upon memory-traces of impulses and not upon real events which trigger them. It is not the memories as such but the libidinal constructions which screen them which are the carriers of neurosis: only fantasies or 'unconscious fictions' that occupy the place of memories possess the requisite for a pathological reaction, and this by virtue of having 'escape[d] the ego altogether' (*SE* 1, p.359). From the 1890s onward, infantile memories are connected less to the intrusion of external stimuli than to the unflagging dynamism of desiring impulses which seek out images to represent their interest in the psyche. These first fantasies have a narrative form; within it the recall of a passively experienced pleasure is transformed into a scenario that the infant directs, rather than suffers. The impulses which charge such fantasies derive from desires which, on reaching a certain intensity, are forced from consciousness. These insights initiated a move away from the idea of a mental apparatus fuelled by a somatic sexual excitation which, undischarged, causes psychical blockages. It meant a structural revision, in order to let the new criminal of the piece - affect, to take over the role that seduction had played formerly. But far the most influential psychoanalytic insights of the 1890s for this study, relate to the equivocal status of affective memories taken up by the unconscious, and to the connected notion that the initial objects of the child's libidinal interest will always be the parents.[12] These ideas suggest that hysterics are in thrall to memories fuelled by 'incompatible' impulses and displaced affects, based not on what actually happens but on what the individual would like, unconsciously and wishfully, to happen. Moreover every individual, to the degree he or she crosses the Oedipal threshold, experiences an intensity of affect and impulse which distorts - at least intermittently - perceptions and ideas entertained by

the psyche. The hysterical impulse is thus universal: 'Every adolescent individual has memory-traces which can only be understood with the emergence of sexual feelings of his own; and accordingly every adolescent must carry the germ of hysteria within him' (*SE* 1, p.356).

From the beginning of this century, Freud's study of hysteria focused less on subjection to precocious and recalcitrant childhood memories, than on the incomplete resolution of psychical ties to early objects. Those unconscious memories which pursue the hysterical ego with disruptive intent, were seen as intimately bound up with repressed and still active family fantasies. Although fantasy's blend of impulse, memory, and wish is an important feature of Freud's early research on hysteria, only toward 1910 does it become tied to the Oedipal configuration. Only with the introduction of a nuclear complex, which permanently retains ideas with a charge of positive and negative affect, is the structuring role of fantasy made explicit (*SE* 11, p.46). The relevance of the nuclear complex to this study lies in its rich elaboration of narrative elements with a psychical base: elements such as intrusion, expectation, arousal, revenge, and resentment. When Freud revised his initial views on hysteria, being those of psychical trauma, affective conflict, and sexual disturbance, he did so in the light of the Oedipus complex. In moving away from the clinical register of pathology and its physiological treatments, Freud was responsible for cultivating a therapeutic cure closely influenced by narrative elements such as plot, based on a general urge to narrativize one's place in family history.

The theme of childhood longing, as a motive for fantasy and infantile stories, pervades Freud's research in hysteria: the child is vulnerable to the affect of longing as soon as the wished-for object, and the autoerotic acts which supplant it, no longer give access to renewed experiences of satisfaction. The infant's experience of satisfaction has the paradoxical status of being real and mythical; for although it has origins in an active engagement with an external object, the memory of this engagement is pursued from childhood at the level of wish.[13] The affect of longing expresses a desire for a perceptual identity, for the coming together of a memory of a past excitement, a past effort, and an excitement which begs immediate satisfaction. Longing is however not a corollary of satisfaction: a direct effect of repression, longing appears as soon as desiring impulses are experienced by the ego as 'incompatible'.[14] Longing indicates a plunge into fantasy, another effect of repression, and it locates excitement 'elsewhere' from consciousness. Affective longing attests to a libidinal insistence which, escaping the bar of repression, emerges along with resistance in latency. In a letter to Fliess in 1897 Freud explains how:

> [the] infantile character develops during the period of 'longing', after the child has been removed from sexual experiences. Longing is the main character trait of hysteria, just as an actual anaesthesia (even though only potential) is its main symptom. During this same period of longing fantasies are formed and masturbation is (regularly?) practiced, which then yields to repression. If it does not yield, then no hysteria develops either; the discharge of sexual excitation for the most part removes the possibility of hysteria. (*Freud/Fliess*, pp.274-75)

An accumulation of sexual impulses, and their repression following an external prohibition, are sufficient grounds for the onset of hysteria. The child's separation from autoerotic pleasures would seem to echo the initial experience of weaning which began the sexual researches; a connection which, providing a focus for suppressed disappointments and resentments, may well serve its increase in the hysteric.

The tenacious narratives of infancy are provoked, not by fears of starvation or of wild animals, but by intrusive siblings and unsated desires. In 'The Sexual Theories of Children' (1908), Freud suggests that the infant's first narratives are worked up from bold questions which, 'like all research, [are] the product of a vital exigency, as though thinking were entrusted with the task of preventing such dreaded events' (*SE* 9, p.213). The earliest sexual theories have a plot and distinct characters; and it is through them that disconnected perceptions and emotional ambiguities from the child's experience of the external world, are elevated from the level of fantasy, more or less touched by affect, to the realm of fiction, more or less compatible with reality. However clumsily constructed, these stories are fuelled by the child's need to create a narrative which favours, and at best blesses, his own conception. One of the most vivid offsprings of these infantile sexual researches derives from the child's attempts to combine autoerotic fantasies with Oedipal scenarios, popularly nominated the family romance. In these narratives, the child's parents are substituted for beings as noble in their bearing as the real parents were cherished in early childhood; equally siblings are conquered or at least subdued, while the young sire is adorned with fitting regalia. The family romance serves to relieve the child of those incestuous and impotent feelings which might, otherwise, undermine the fragile esteem on which the child depends. As Freud communicates to Fliess in 1898, the family romance 'serves on the one hand the need for self-aggrandizement and on the other as a defence against incest' (*Freud/Fliess* p.317).[15] Finally it is the flexibility of the family romance that recommends it, for within its 'baggy-monster' form a diverse range of circumstances and characters may happily be accommodated.

The family romance flourishes in the phallic phase, influencing boy and girl alike before the Oedipal scenario; yet its function in later phases is contrastive for each sex. In linking hysteria with

a premature and thus passive sexual awakening, Freud associates it with femininity; in contrast hysteria's 'brother' psychoneurosis, obsessional neurosis, being conceived in a later episode of sexual pleasure, has a masculine aspect. The obsessive reckons his pleasures wrong but, occurring too late for hysterical repression, they are disguised in consciousness by conscientiousness and derivative substitutes. One could say that the obsessive suffers self-reproach, along with a loss of the causative links which might account for it, whereas the hysteric suffers psychical amnesia and repressed conflict. Nevertheless both the young boy, in so far as he inclines to obsession, and the young girl, in so far as she inclines to hysteria, are subject to the operations of a retrospective guilt in which the ego assigns culpability for bad acts often years after the offending but pleasurable encounter. In addition, because a mixing of the psychoneuroses is the norm rather than the exception, as a result of each child entertaining masculine and feminine wishes in the Oedipal scenario, a marriage of hysteria and obsession is common. Given that the positions of masculine and feminine are indeed cultivatedly slowly, fitfully, and are not produced by divine or genetic providence, then a degree of equivocation - a gradual picking over of possibilities - marks their progress.[16] What brings the hysteric and the obsessive into an intimate relation is their common identification with an early loved one: both are Oedipal defences against libidinal pleasures incited by parental figures. Thus on one level the hysterical and obsessional structures overlap, inspiring movements of attraction and repulsion which act to relieve and intensify each other. This meshing helps to explain why the supplicant hysteric unconsciously seeks out her obsessive brother as ally, and vice versa; for an outline of each structure, at least in nascent form, resides in every breast.

Although the family romance finds it expression in girl and boy, its denouement works out differently for the girl. Receipt of the Oedipal demand that the girl should focus libidinal expectations on the father, and should forego any such interest in the mother, provokes three distinct responses. To the degree the girl absorbs the Oedipal 'No' as a rebuke for past acts, is the degree to which she will hysterically repress intense libidinal impulses as dangerous; to the extent the girl interprets the demand as promise of deferred gratification with a representative of the father, a safe passage to femininity is assured; and insofar as identificatory rather than libidinal impulses for the father chart the girl's course, masculine traits will preside. To Freud it appeared that the girl, in not taking the castratory threat literally, fails to realize the psychical threat which severs family ties. Memories of satisfaction are repressed in the hysteric, leaving links to the early loved object open and in attendance; in her longing to rediscover a nostalgic past in a wishful future, the hysteric's memories remain unaltered by the ordinary wearing effects of

consciousness. For as long as the defences which banish memories from consciousness remain active, the hysteric is vulnerable to the attraction of unconscious memories within and, projectively absorbed, from without. Further, to the degree the hysteric stands back from repudiated sexual experiences, she is compelled to make affective links with those who are unwitting ambassadors for them. One powerful explanation for a compatibility which overrides any incompatibility experienced by the ego lies in the phenomenon of transference, the still centre of all hysterical relations. Through transference a series of hidden links between hysterical repression and a servitude at the core of intimate relations becomes explicit, often being expressed in an overweeningly credulous relation to the loved object.[17] Thus the authorial voice of *Daniel Deronda*, observing the positive effects of this inclination, remarks that 'no chemical process shows a more wonderful activity than the transforming influence of the thoughts we imagine to be going on in another'.[18]

The hysteric is a character looking for an author, for a legitimizing principle to organize her thoughts and feelings, and for a representative agency to receive repudiated ideas and impulses on her behalf so that she can come to know them. Hysteria may be regarded as a narrative which begs interpretation by another. Embodying an unconscious appeal to the structuring power of another, the hysteric clings to this special other in the hope that he or she will represent, will narrate, her experience. The hysteric is hindered by her inability to recall original experiences of satisfaction; having repressed unconscious links to the satisfying object, she is drawn to and quickly becomes dependent on a more desiring other, in whom memory traces of satisfaction remain conscious. This leads to a hysterical dependence on an intimate whose facility to organize the psychical field remains intact. In his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Freud places these contrastive potentials inside a family framework:

> It is no rare thing to find perversions and psychoneuroses occurring in the same family, and distributed between the two sexes in such a way that the male members of the family, or one of them, are positive perverts, while the females, true to the tendency of their sex to repression, are negative perverts, that is, hysterics. (*SE* 7, p.236)

The hysteric is attracted to intimates who represent those impulses she repudiates: hysteria is a revolution of suppressed eroticism which relies on the dynamism of perversion to fan it. The hysteric requires this 'brother', whether overtly perverse or wilfully conscientious, to address, contain, and to elaborate a suppressed 'too much' of hysterical sexuality which is latent in her. At best, the hysteric's unconscious co-operation with a fraternal figure allows her to pick her way between two trends: open identification with what is most repressed in herself, and a wholesale repudiation of perverse pleasures. Thus the experience of hysterical incompatibility, in which the

ego rejects an idea as unacceptable, may mask an underlying compatibility which is brought into relief through intimacy with a fraternal other.

The links between primary psychical impulse and secondary process appear ruptured in the hysteric, on account of ideals which inhibit the absorption of conflicting ideas. The hysteric is haunted, not so much by unconscious desires, as by precocious values which censure them; values on which a fragile identity is poised. In her semi-autobiographical *Cassandra*, Florence Nightingale's heroine remarks of her sex: 'It is a wonder that we are so good as we are, not that we are so bad'.[19] The hysteric, at once agent and victim of contradictions within, is disadvantaged when it comes to making psychical judgements regarding reality. In Freud's *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, Dora displays a marked blurring of the distinction between secretions of desire and the discharge of disease, a mistake which indicates her broader failure to distinguish libidinal triumph from organic decline. The success of the young girl's passage to the feminine position would appear partly reliant on an inhibition of knowledge, on a limit to how much she should want to know. In the hysteric 'too much' knowledge, prematurely received and insufficiently elaborated, hazards a trauma of insight which appears to strip the libidinal coating from psychical experience.[20] In the *Studies on Hysteria* Freud deduces that the apparent 'not knowing' exhibited by his hysterical patients was in fact a ''not wanting to know' - a not knowing which might be to a greater or less extent conscious.' (*SE* 2: p.270). This 'not wanting to know' is more psychically sophisticated than mere ignorance or obstinacy. What often trips the hysteric up in the progress of thought is a fear of violating an otherwise loved object at the level of wish. In her a series of imaginative inhibitions, resulting from the hysterical fear of harming the loved object, blocks the transformation of potent impulses into less endangering conscious associations. This cleaving to the 'good' is thus a reactive response to the punishment she presumes would greet her unrestrained use of the loved object. The hysteric's implicit fear is that, following her ruthless enjoyment of this object, she would be subject to a reprisal of unimaginable proportions. Instead, the constant exercise of inhibiting virtues shields the girl from unguarded combat with the loved object, an otherwise urgent struggle which overrides any concern for the object's survival.

Without this struggle the hysterical girl fails to appreciate the object's survival of it; instead she apprehends its fantasied demolition in an unconscious and hence distorted form. This dread is transferred on to the fear of losing the loved object, a threat intensified to the degree its unconscious model is damaged in fantasy.[21] The effects of hysterical suppression upon the workings of thought are analogous to the fate of unsuccessful childhood sexual researches, in

which:

> the set of views which are bound up with being 'good', but also with a cessation of reflection, become the dominant and conscious views; while the other set, for which the child's work of research has meanwhile obtained fresh evidence, but which are not supposed to count, become the suppressed and 'unconscious' ones. The nuclear complex of a neurosis is in this way brought into being. (*SE* 9, p.214)

The operation of the nuclear complex, later elaborated as the Oedipus complex, divides the child's affective loyalties according to a 'dominant' concept of the 'good'. This virtue cannot be moral, for as such it would be the successful issue of the nuclear complex, and would not be its preliminary. It is possible to see how a society which prides itself on the cultivation of virtue in women and girls, yet ignores the conditions in which lasting goodness is sustainable, is - in an indirect way - responsible for the development of neurotic illness. The effects of this system are evident in a remark that Madame de Mortsauf makes in Balzac's *Le Lys de la vallée*: 'Si la vertu ne consiste pas à se sacrifier pour ses enfants et pour son mari, qu'est-ce donc que la vertu?'[22]

An abiding fascination for the hysteric's family romance, as it underlies a more pervasive interest in realist literary narratives, is partly due to its cautionary function. In essence the hysteric's tale brings to life what happens when, in response to a command against autoerotic pleasure and a conviction of maternal nullity, the father is elected deity. Reverence for the father, suffused with unrequitable impulses and stabilized by affection, promotes the place of paternity as Oedipal refuge for the hysterical girl. The idealization of the father forges a link between phallic promise and feminine inferiority, so that the hysteric's request for paternal sanction becomes bound up with her escape from an identification with what she projectively perceives as maternal subordination. An ideal love for the father is counter to a fixed relation to the mother which, due to the repression of strong sexual and aggressive impulses, is marked by hysterical dread. The hysteric takes the prohibition of the phallic mother as law, inflecting it with the imaginative portent of suppressed fantasy. From that moment, taking pleasure in herself makes the hysteric bad; despite the reproduction of pleasure being, for Freud, the sole motivation for human action (1896 *Freud/Fliess*, p.212). Damned by the ego if she continues to pursue pleasures considered retrograde, and disaffected if she neglects a life motivated by pleasure - such is the hysteric's dilemma. Being bad, in the weighty emotional rather than moral sense, is equivalent, for the hysteric, to being unworthy of receiving love; even though, ironically, it is only through receiving love that the girl who considers herself unworthy is promised redemption. Consequently the search for a model to uphold an ideal sense of self is uppermost in mind for the hysteric, who is unable to live up to her own imaginatively distorted estimation of the good. The hysteric's tale warns others of what occurs when ideals are located and accredited externally, when the

organizing principles of psychical progress fail to be set up within. If indeed the operations of thought offer deliverance from the reign of impulse, then the inhibition of thought, subsequent to a negative Oedipal imperative, could be considered - as it certainly was for Florence Nightingale's Cassandra - a curse.[23] Whenever the hysteric stops short, failing to follow a thought or fantasy through for fear of damaging an important other, the effects of hysterical inhibition are apparent. And it is repeated experiences of hysterical inhibition which lead to a permanent state of 'not knowing', a state which presumes a separation of thought and feeling. Such a breakdown is psychical before it is moral; for in its train psychical elements, vital for the elaboration of meaning, are expunged from consciousness.

* *

Although hysteria was recognized, identified anew, by psychologists throughout Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century, its features abound in literary texts from the beginning of the century. The hysteric stalks the texts of acclaimed realist writers not because their psychological acumen identified a new social type, previously neglected by European thinkers, but because the figure of the hysteric spoke to something - a suppressed hysterical kernel - in themselves. As exemplified in literary narrative, the hysterical scenario depicts a sense of character and fate which is indebted to age-old notions such as triumph and defeat, desire and pathos. As self-elected scribe of the family romance, the literary author took up the challenge of the hysteric's tale with zeal, unravelling motive and reconstructing meaning in order to replace a muteness at its core. Whereas the hysteric is hindered by a gap in consciousness subsequent to repression, the author is in the position of 'knowing all'; a species of mastery which assumes an understanding of what the hysteric cannot herself comprehend. Standing on the grassy verge of the family plot, many nineteenth-century authors presume an omniscience which depends less on psychological acuity than on the suspension of affect, a strategy enhanced by their own removal from family ties. Realist authors are free to create relational ties by the chapter: to plan marriages and later to undermine them; to propound virtue only to qualify it; to foretell fate and then to thwart it. Besides being an inventor of lineages these authors are also keepers of plots; in twisting the fates of their characters they echo every 'young phantasy-builder' who, Freud remarks to Fliess in 1897, constructs his tales on the basis of 'things that have been *heard* but understood *subsequently*' (*Freud/Fliess*, p.239). The work of the storyteller is enlivened by impulses first serialized in the family romance; retrospective in the fullest sense, the author animates memories attached to events from a psychologically remote past. Such narratives are ready vehicles for the affects of longing and resistance. Generative, discursive, and desiring, the

affect of longing is a continuous and wishful stimulus for the narrative form. In so far as longing continues to operate, no story - however tragic - can end. In contrast, the operations of resistance threaten to cut the narrative off: thwarting, wilful, and energetic, this affect issues from the blocking of longing by defence. Wishful longing and unyielding resistance both share the same source: each is an active response to the individual's withdrawal from originary experiences of satisfaction. Together they generate a narrative frame in which wish and defence monitor and fertilize each other; together they ensure that no burst of affect halts the story, either through an unforeseen breaking off, a *petit mort* in the narrative, or through a slide back to illicit pleasures.

The hysteric's complex role in nineteenth-century narratives may be schematized by her confusion over whether to identify with the mother and so to attract the father, or to resemble the father and thus to attract the mother. As unsung muse to the realist enterprise the hysteric is a paradoxical source of both the ideals and the conflict integral to literary narratives of this period. No matter how suppressed the author's identification with the hysterical character is, his or her determination to succeed where the hysteric expressly fails remains the author's foremost concern. This aim to triumph in the representation of hysterical defeat derives from an Oedipal battleground: in adopting a narrative stance the author draws the lines so that, while metaphorically suing for his or her heroine's love, the author is confident of emerging victorious from the fray. Ultimately, the degree to which authors draw on the hysteric as a creative source marks the degree to which they project her dilemma beyond themselves, by assigning the hysterical structure to another. To accede to the authorial role means implicitly, and ideally, to overcome incestuous tendencies and thus to stand apart from the family nexus; it is to transcend those affective links which, when prolonged, captivate the hysteric. However sympathetically realist authors present the travails of their fictive heroines, they yet pride themselves on a facility to create and assess the whole narrative in which the heroine features. Although it was only from the 1880s onward that concepts relating to the psyche were clinically defined, a sweep of European realist narratives throughout the century affirm that it is mechanisms originating in family structures which determine the individual psyche: it is impulses such as identification, repression, and hostility which, subject to admixture and transformation, characterize the individual.

If the position of author is an effect of society, the hysteric is an effect of the family - she is made and not born. Whereas the author diffuses his or her affective interests in the production of texts, the hysteric inveighs against herself in a caricature of creativity, through a concentration turned inward which is manifest - in collaboration with defence - in traits, acts, and symptoms which

squander access to cultural forms. The hysteric is characterized by acts she fails to fulfil, thoughts she thinks better of pursuing, and fantasies she suppresses in their bud; the author, in contrast, makes his or her name through fantasies which are transformed into ideas, and by channelling affective complexes into sophisticated characters and complex plots. Yet between hysteric and author lies a tacit dependence, as demonstrated in the author's sympathetic representation of the hysteric and, more complicitous, the author's partial identification with hysterical traits of the heroine. Realist authors, despite the assertiveness of their endeavours, may thus be coupled with the hysterical character: together they promote a cultural marriage which begets scores of realist narratives. Through this liaison hysterical sexual confusion, as a result of gaining symbolic expression, is gradually opened up to the generation of meaning. Perhaps no better example of the subtlety of this exposure is George Eliot's tribute to all those commonplace St. Teresas, described in the Prelude of *Middlemarch*:

> Many Theresas have been born who found for themselves no epic life wherein there was a constant unfolding of far-resonant action; perhaps only a life of mistakes, the offspring of a certain spiritual grandeur ill-matched with the meanness of opportunity; perhaps a tragic failure which found no sacred poet and sank unwept into oblivion. With dim lights and tangled circumstance they tried to shape their thought and deed in noble agreement; but, after all, to common eyes their struggles seemed mere inconsistency and formlessness; for these later-born Theresas were helped by no coherent social faith and order which could perform the function of knowledge for the ardently willing soul. Their ardour alternated between a vague ideal and the common yearning of womanhood, so that the one was disapproved as extravagance, and the other condemned as a lapse.[...] Here and there is born a Saint Theresa, foundress of nothing, whose loving heart-beats and sobs after an unattained goodness tremble off and are dispersed among hindrances, instead of centring in some long-recognizable deed.[24]

It would be a mistake to suggest that the hysterical character is a virtuous yet piteous partner to a more heroic authorial 'brother'. It would be easy to forget that on the other side of the boy's Oedipal usurpation of the father lies his covert repudiation of the mother, a gesture which is coloured by his negative Oedipus complex. Although the hostility that motivates a father-son Oedipal clash is readily accounted for, the quietly enacted rejection of the mother, engendering shame, is less widely acknowledged. And yet only after such a move has been effected is the temptation to lie alongside the father, in place of the mother, transformed into the desire to combat and transcend the patriarch. A wishful complicity between father and child, characterized as feminine because enlivened by passive wishes, thus remains present to the degree the Oedipus complex remains active. From this perspective, literary narratives appear as an atonement; their purpose being to channel negative masculine desires - expressed in man and woman alike - into a creative offering that can be directed, in sublimated form, away from parental

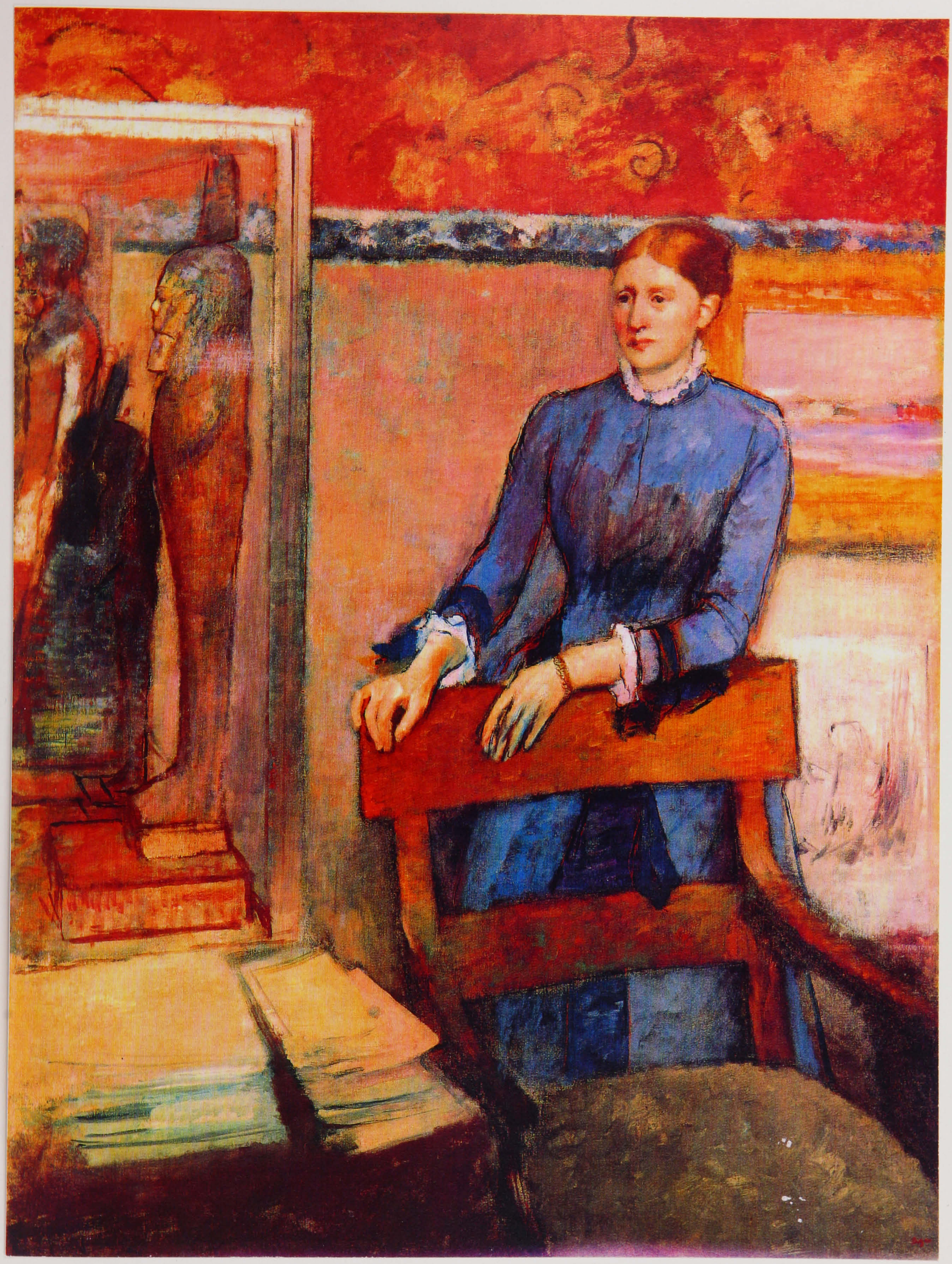

Figure 2: Edgar Degas, 'Hélène Rouart in her Father's Study' (1996)

figures. When this offering is made in symbolic form, the potential arises for complex psychical pathways to be set up and for cultural values to be renewed. In *Totem and Taboo* Freud quotes Goethe's Faust, who advises: 'What thou hast inherited from thy fathers, acquire it to make it thine' (*SE* 13, p.158). The passage from inheritance to acquisition, from passively receiving to actively taking up the ideas and values which characterize preceding generations, can however be fraught. The transitional passage of youth may prompt radical fears; apprehensions which, confronted and survived, became manifest in a residual sympathy for less intrepid siblings. Once an individual has loosened the attachments that bind child to parental figures, an equivocation, expressed as interest in the hysterical dilemma, may abide. For instance when Freud - anticipating the Oedipal triangle in a letter to Fliess in 1897 - suggests that Shakespeare's handling of a vacillating Hamlet is hysterical, such an exchange of sympathies is mooted (*Freud/Fliess*, pp.272-73). Indeed Freud's scenting out of Hamlet's hysterical plaint, to be unable to kill the perpetrator of a homicide he himself is imaginatively tempted to execute, presumes an identificatory base. In a broad sense literary narrative and the analysis of the psyche, psychoanalysis, are twin endeavours: both procedures presume the combined influence of psychical defence and cultural values. Narratives begin from the premise that certain impulses, for instance Hamlet's unconscious desire for Gertrude, will not blossom into act. Nevertheless proximity to such impulses excites author and reader alike, yet requires neither of them to identify such hysterical desires as his or her own.

All those elements which hinder the hysteric from achieving symbolic status become the stuff of her description in nineteenth-century realist narratives. Although this study takes literary narratives as its sources, examples from other media are easily identified. Edgar Degas undertook to paint his close friend's daughter, Hélène Rouart, on various occasions: at the age of ten on her industrialist father's knee; as a young woman sketched in alongside her Hellenistically-attired mother; and later, following the artist's discovery of a rivalrous tension between mother and daughter, by her father's side once again. Degas's final painting depicts his model in an embryonic hysterical pose: Hélène Rouart, ensconced in her father's study, stands behind an outsized mahogany chair, empty yet invitingly open; to the left a metal and glass case contains three Egyptian statues, also enlarged; behind hangs a landscape and a Corot sketch of a peasant crouching; along the top right is an ornate Eastern wallpaper in red and gold. The sitter herself is abstract although melancholy in expression: her dress is blue and cut conventionally, while her hair picks out the burnished gold of the frame and wallpaper. Neither father nor mother is present yet the father's chair, an antique from her mother's side, takes up a quarter of the painting surface.

Egyptian statues, signifying hysteria's ancient lineage, face away from the desk on which a cabinet rests, adjacent to a pile of papers.[25] The sitter's glance is oblique; there is no direct communication in the painting and whatever meaning is evoked is in response to speculation. Thus the hysteric, in this case Hélène Rouart, not only requires but compels the act of interpretation; without it she, and precisely her gaze, would remain opaque and enigmatic. More than this, the hysteric could not exist in the absence of a viewer; like the Sphinx her presence prompts the interrogative mode, being a lure to sense-making. Degas's treatment of his friend's daughter highlights the way in which the effort to understand those conditions implied in the hysterical dilemma worked to motivate art and culture in the nineteenth century.

And yet a less humane element lurks in such cultural projects. The hysteric represents a value beyond that of human type: expressive of elements of passive opposition and incestuous liaison she is a symbol for what might otherwise remain, unsubstantiated, in the creator's and viewer's psyche. Caught in diagonal identifications between mother and father, the hysteric lends herself to artistic representation through exemplifying the consequences of psychical arrest. The hysteric's very helplessness acts to alert more wily but never entirely unsusceptible others, who have themselves achieved psychical independence at considerable cost. In the 'Project for a Scientific Psychology' Freud describes the experience of hysterical helplessness, in which memories of intimate contact join with experiences of traumatic absence, in terms of an inexpressible powerlessness; during this experience the hysteric feels herself to be without that with which wishes and demands are communicated. Conceivably, the other side of the imaginative sympathy with which the author surrounds the hysteric lies a species of resentment, which on occasion may flare into contempt, particularly when the author is female and thus aware of the price of her own advance from the hysterical position. However outwardly stable society appeared during the nineteenth century, there is no doubt that fissures in the social fabric were multiple, and it was into these that a positive discontent on behalf of women crept. Uncomfortably combining the political and the social, women's demands no longer focused on the pursuit and maintenance of happiness and order - an admirable eighteenth-century ideal - but aimed at pleasures and rights less evidently compatible with consensual social mores. While one section of society was hotly deliberating the virtues of God and king, another section - in the vanguard of which was the cultural elite - was participating in an equally vociferous debate on the 'Woman Question'. Although this discussion tipped toward emancipation and suffrage, a substantial remainder, less immediately social, became grist for the literary mill. As a consequence of this ferment emotional and conceptual states like satisfaction, discontent, desire, revolt, loyalty, and

dependence were all extensively elaborated within European literature, reflecting a move away from the hitherto religious and social determination of a language for the sentiments.

The rebirth of the poet as realist author in the nineteenth century was not simply the result of fortuitous ambition. Provision existed in the shifting relations of a society no longer governed by external manifestations of conscience - God, king, father. Although the rate of change in each European nation-state differed markedly, the effects of rapid reforms and intellectual shifts were common throughout Europe. The easing of pressure which resulted from a widespread liberalization of social policy meant that new ways of instituting public values as principles of private conscience had to be found. As the nineteenth century progressed, the people of Europe looked to its authors to represent how and what people thought, as greatly as they relied on them to communicate what they actually did, a change which meant that the author was perceived less as social chronicler than as lay psychologist. Not only was an increasingly literate population of nineteenth-century Europe subject to unprecedented social change, it was also party to a sense of there being something amiss at the emotional heart of man, within intimacy itself. Heartfelt, orthodox proclamations of eternal love proved not worth their tender when it came to appraising the reversals, fusions, inhibitions, and displacements which characterized love's practice. Love in the nineteenth century could no longer be wholly understood through theological, courtly, or romantic codes; a more complex set of terms was required. As a consequence less emphasis was given to society, as a canvas on which autonomous character emerges, than to individuals who, as a rich weave of psychical and material determinants, were seen as included in but not exhausted by the category of the social.

Although it was not until the 1880s that Freud stressed the role of sexuality in female unrest, writers like Balzac and Tolstoy before him were quick to criticize standards which, turning a blind eye to male wantonness, yet proscribed feminine sensuousness. In his *Physiologie du Mariage* (1829), Balzac set down with authority and daring the vagaries and contradictions which result from the contractual union of individuals from two divergently developed sexes. In the introduction to his manual for the chary husband, Balzac's narrator sets down an illuminating if chastening tale told him at Ghent. A widow of ten years, stricken young by disease, is watched over by three heirs who are as scrupulous in their attentions of her as they are impatient for her demise. Wintry dark and silence, interspersed with shufflings of attendant nurse and doctor, are suddenly broken by a hot coal that falls from the grate on to the polished floor. At this sound, the half-conscious widow 'sat bold upright and opened wide her eyes which shone like those of a cat

in the dark'. As if by force of miracle she jumps down from the bed, picks up the red coal, and tosses it back into the fire. Following her instantaneous relapse and death the heirs set to unfixing the carpet and taking up the boards, quickened by self-interest. Instead of a fortune in gold, a plaster encasing the Countess's husband - presumed dead in Java and renowned to have been 'deeply mourned' by his wife - is unearthed.[26] Such, we are to assume, is the result of a matrimonial pact which esteems monogamous virtue while outlawing desire itself as adulterous, which seals a bond for perpetuity from insufficiently developed impulses, wishes, and emotions. Tolstoy, whose *Kreutzer Sonata* (1889) tore like a fire across the Russian reading public (the opening remark of the times was not 'How are you?' but 'Have you read the *Kreutzer Sonata*?'), was no less damning, although less light-hearted, than his forebear Balzac. In a conversation that Gorky recalls in a memoir, Tolstoy observes:

> Man survives earthquakes, epidemics, the horrors of disease, and all the agonies of the soul, but for all time his most tormenting tragedy has been, is, and will be - the tragedy of the bedroom. Saying this, he smiled triumphantly: at times he has the broad, calm smile of a man who has overcome something extremely difficult or from whom some sharp, long-gnawing pain has suddenly lifted.27

When Charcot, in a similar vein, refers to this same dilemma in Freud's hearing in 1886, the effect of this master's words smoulders rather than burns in the young man's mind. In 'The History of the Psychoanalytic Movement' (1914) Freud recollects how, nearly twenty years earlier:

> Charcot suddenly broke out with great animation: 'Mais, dans des cas pareils c'est toujours la chose génitale, toujours...toujours...toujours'; and he crossed his arms over his stomach, hugging himself and jumping up and down on his toes several times in his own characteristically lively way. (*SE* 14 p.14)

It was not that Balzac, Tolstoy, Charcot, and Freud had access to new knowledge, thanks to a burgeoning social and scientific interest in the condition of man, rather their discoveries were an effect of the attention they paid to what previously had fallen on civilized and thus slightly deaf ears.

It is not immediately clear why so much credence has been given to Freud's initially highly speculative research, which was based on what he himself declares, in *Studies on Hysteria,* are little more than sophisticated exercises in narrative (*SE* 2, pp.160-01). In a period of pervasive scientific materialism Freud had empirical science and specifically pathology on his side: a high incidence of conversion hysterias, with their extreme anaesthesias and paraplegias, were suggestive of a force more fundamental than a merely psychically conceived malaise. Yet however powerfully these hysterical symptoms attest to an organic base - whether cough, limp, stutter, vaginism, or vomiting - their presence works to obscure the psychical structure which underlies them. Significantly it was not until Freud hit the so-called 'bedrock of femininity' that he was moved to extend his research into the cultural sphere. Convinced that a solution to the riddle

of hysteria lay less with bodily lesions than with voluptuous satisfaction, and subsequently with its repression and denial, Freud was encouraged to extend his focus into the symbolic domain. In 'Those Wrecked by Success' (1916), Freud openly uses literature as source material: in it he singles out the fate of Rebecca West, in Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*, to represent what befalls the girl who 'steals' the husband from the woman who stands for wife and mother. Haunted by her successful condemnation of Rosmer's wife, which leads to the latter's suicide, Rebecca becomes morally paralyzed by the success of her inveigling. Over and above her refusal to marry Rosmer, in view of her unconscious terror of conceiving a child with him, Rebecca is compelled to take herself off, in the ultimate sense, to stay the compulsion she is prey to. Here an incestuous desire for the father, carried over from a devotional yet repressed identification with the mother, is punished by hysteria. The amnesia Rebecca suffers in regard to the motives that lie behind her acts helps to seal this heroine's hysterical fate: for it is in copying the mother unconsciously that Rebecca - and the hysteric she typifies - manages to spite the mother consciously. As is Oedipally set down, although the girl may long for the loved and loving object, she must never come into possession of it; moreover she must never mistake the paternal refuge for her rightful home. Rather than prompting castratory knowledge, the girl's positive Oedipus complex would seem to function as a holding ground for the woman who is destined to fulfil her feminine value through the pact of marriage and childbirth. The virtuous reputation of the nineteenth-century woman thus rests, in part, on an arrested femininity, in which a forbidden interest in the father is displaced outwards on to a fraternal figure or on to a legitimate husband.

To spurn the mother for her supposed failure and yet to privilege the father for his phallic promise, is to create a cycle of feminine inferiority in which the woman flourishes by upholding standards which entail her subordination. From this perspective to refuse the phallic compliment of marriage and to step to one side of a legitimized femininity, either through spinsterhood or adultery, is to invite oblivion or, worse, notoriety. A disgraced wife is, according to this standard, a failed woman; her fall being fit reward for disregarding social norms and cultivating the fruits of desire. Both Mrs Glasher in *Daniel Deronda* and Natasha Rostov in *War and Peace* ignore the paternal edict in choosing to love outside the accepted frame, but unlike their male unintendeds, they are damned for flouting a standard which reserves duplicity for the masculine side (*SE* 9, p.195). The fallen woman is, in the extreme, a social criminal, for in her sexualized fall she snaps ethical categories under the pressure of a motivated disruption from within. When the woman, traditionally the object of desire, turns the tables by claiming the status of subject, the risk to a society based on vested nonreciprocal relations, is great. This risk could and did however work in

woman's favour, rousing women to a degree of self-knowledge which entailed a new and close questioning of received objects of feminine reverence.

A significant feature of hysterical tales, as they are embedded in realist narratives of the nineteenth century, is the role of the fraternal figure. A manifestation of patriarchy, the paternal ideal could no longer be venerated once ideals of godhead and kinghood, from which it derived, had been put into question. Once fallibility became a feature of the patriarchal ideal, it signalled, through semantic contagion, the possible collapse of meaning. This was an eventuality that neither realist author nor hysteric could well tolerate. Within the project of narrative realism a tension, between the conscious intentions and unconscious desires of the author, is constant. Although both author and hysteric appear loyal to inherited values, seeking to conserve the parental object of value in their witting devotion to it, another force - visible but less compelling - risks harm to it. Narrative realism is a conservative trend which, like the hysteric's insight, discovers much - but too late. The nineteenth-century narratives in this study have a paradoxical status: on the one hand the author attempts to conserve the social framework by refashioning it anew with each novel, while on the other the very assiduousness of these efforts highlights the gap which the departure of the patriarchal family leaves behind - like the bright square of wallpaper left showing after the removal of a long-hung painting. The implicit aim of the nineteenth-century authors in this study appears less to uphold existing orthodoxies, than to tell stories that comprehend their fall. From this perspective paternity becomes tinged with a quality of masquerade, setting up a drama which gives the hysteric a supporting role. In this slow upheaval the symbolic codes which previously were handed down by and within the family, were quietly handed over to a rapidly expanding professional class: a class within which the status of the author, like that of the doctor, was quickly established. The hysteric, who experienced fate as a form of duty, as conscious acquiescence and passive protest - exemplified by Madame de Mortsauf in *Le Lys de la vallée* - stood in direct contrast to authors who chose to translate a passive fate into an active destiny, through a combination of chance, ambition, and creativity. The author and the hysteric thus represent contrary responses to shifts of the period: the one locked in a struggle for creative mastery, the other in flight from unwelcome knowledge. While the masculine response to a revealed flaw in paternity is to internalize those ideals on which sublimation and enterprise rest, the hysterical reaction to this same flaw leads to the libidinal interest attached to these insights being lost to awareness through repression.

A gradual social dissolution of patriarchal structures helps to explain the significance of the

fraternal figure as disguised helpmate, lover, and rival to his hysterical 'sister' in the narratives of this study. Whether in the guise of prodigal son, handsome stranger, or omniscient narrator the figure of the brother plays a crucial role in variously enticing, subordinating, and consoling his less fortunate feminine sibling. Effectively the narrator adopts the fraternal position in virtue of assuming this role. The narrator, who evades the attribution of gender, enjoys a complex relation to the family - which supplies the implicit model for all relations in realist narratives. Although the narrator, or implied author, can afford to offer a critique of the family that charts its rise and fall, his position within the narrative cannot fail itself to reflect the dynamics of the family model. This factor explains the divided loyalties which effect hysteric and narrator together; for the family implicates everyone who comes into contact with it. Both diffuse and tenuous, the influence of the family is not diminished by the tides of social change. This pervasiveness can be explained: however fully the author integrates the loss in value of the patriarchal ideal, whatever of it cannot be ceded becomes expressed within the narrative as compassion. This sympathy, captured in the refrain, 'There but for the grace of God go I', is woven into the author's identification with the hysteric's fate. In itself unsymbolic, the hysteric's life history is brought alive by the representational skill of authors who re-enact their own emergence from the 'Familienroman' through a commitment to the hysterical heroine's less fortunate fate. Finally, it is because the hysterical tale presents itself as a collapsed narrative that it offers itself as a stimulus to interpretation, to the putting into play of dynamic perceptions there where only amnesiac or inarticulate feelings reside. Realist authors are then heroic to the degree that they rescue the refractory experiences of the hysteric and organize them into a narrative which may be absorbed, by all, as knowledge.

NOTES

1. Freud to Martha Bernays, 19 June 1882 , in *Letters of Sigmund Freud*, ed. by Ernst L. Freud (London: Hogarth, 1961), p.26.
2. February 19 1899, in *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, ed. by Jeffrey M. Masson, (Cambridge: Harvard, 1992), p.345. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text as *Freud/Fliess*.
3. Freud to Martha Bernays, 19 June 1882, in *Letters of Sigmund Freud*, p.26.
4. Freud to Martha Bernays, 19 June 1882, in *Letters of Sigmund Freud*, p.26. 'The New Melusine' appears in 'Wilhelm Meister's Years of Travel or the Renunciants', *Wilhelm Meister*, (London: Angus Calder, 1982), vol. 6, pp.35-52.
5. Florence Nightingale, *Suggestions for Thought*, ed. by Mary Poovey (London: Hogarth. 1991), p.207.
6. Florence Nightingale, *Suggestions for Thought*, p.206.
7. Mentioned in the preface to 'Observation of a Severe Case of Hemi-Anaesthesia in a Hysterical Male', *SE* 1, p.24. See also 'Freud's Lecture on Masculine Hysteria (October 15 1886) [A Critical Study]', in *Beyond the Unconscious: Essays of Henri F. Ellenberger in the History of Psychiatry* ed. by Mark S. Micale (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993) pp.119-137.
8. May 12 1910, in *The Minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society*, ed. by Herman Nunberg and Ernst Federn (New York: International Universities Press, 1967), vol. 2, p.229.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. See 'Once upon a Text: Hysteria from Hippocrates', in *Hysteria Beyond Freud*, ed. by Sander L. Gilman, and others (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp.3-90.
12. 'I have gained a sure inkling of the structure of hysteria. Everything goes back to the reproduction of scenes. Some can be obtained directly, others always by way of fantasies set up in front of them. The fantasies stem from things that have been *heard* but understood *subsequently*, and all their material is of course genuine. They are protective structures, sublimations of the facts, embellishments of them, and at the same time serve for self-relief. Their accidental origin is perhaps from masturbation fantasies.' May 2 1897, *Freud/Fliess*, p.239.
13. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* the experience of satisfaction is described as a facilitation or a permanent psychical investment, which is set down between the image of the perceived object, the image of the effort expended in attaining it, and endogenously excited neurones cathected in a state of urgency. (*SE* 5, pp.565-56)
14. In his discussion of Miss Lucy R.'s case, Freud notes: 'it turns out to be a *sine qua non* for the acquisition of hysteria that an incompatibility should develop between the ego and some idea presented to it' (*SE* 2, p.122).
15. In 'Family Romances', Freud notes that 'its many-sidedness and its great range of applicability enable it to meet every sort of requirement. In this way, for instance, the young phantasy-builder can get rid of his forbidden degree of kinship with one of his sisters if he finds himself sexually attracted to her' (*SE* 9, p.240).

16. In addition, a two-phase onset of neurosis is complicated by the effects of bisexuality: to the degree the girl entertains twin desires for mother and father a potential for obsession is present, while for as long as she seeks passive gratification of wishes 'to be done to', hysteria waits in the wings. However strongly the hysteric is psychically affected by unpleasure, caused by an initial overwhelming of the ego, she may still entertain memories and fantasies that are offensive to the moral sensitivities of puberty. Equally no matter how firmly the boy cleaves to conscientiousness, he may still experience unpleasure which necessitates repressions further to existing practices of avoidance.

17. In his 1905 summary of thirty years of psychical treatment, Freud admits that: 'outside hypnosis and in real life, credulity such as the subject has in relation to his hypnotist is shown only by a child towards his beloved parents, and that an attitude of similar subjection on the part of some person towards another has only one parallel, though a complete one - namely in certain love-relationships where there is extreme devotion. A combination of extreme devotion and credulous obedience is in general among the characteristics of love'. (*SE* 7, p.296)

18. George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* , ed. by Barbara Hardy (London: Penguin, 1971) (p.)

19. Florence Nightingale, *Suggestions for Thought*, p.209.

20. In the same paper, Freud notes that women's 'upbringing forbids their concerning themselves intellectually with sexual problems though they nevertheless feel extremely curious about them, and frightens them by condemning such curiosity as unwomanly and a sign of a sinful disposition. In this way they are scared away from *any* form of thinking and knowledge loses its value for them. The prohibition of thought extends beyond the sexual field, partly through unavoidable association, partly automatically, like the prohibition of thought about religion among men, or the prohibition of thought about loyalty among faithful subjects. [...] the undoubted intellectual inferiority of so many women can [...] be traced back to the inhibition of thought necessitated by sexual suppression.' (*SE* 9, pp.198-99)

21. In extreme circumstances images are perceived by the hysteric in a hallucinatory form, such that it is uncertain whether the object she perceives is dead or alive. Breuer's Anna O. thus finds herself looking at 'a particularly terrifying hallucination' of 'her father with a death's head', a vision which appears as she enters the drawing-room for tea following her father's death (*SE* 2, p.37).

22. Honoré de Balzac, *Le Lys de la vallée*, *Pléiade* vol.9, p.1163.

23. In the 'Project for a Scientific Psychology' the status given to thought is unrivalled: 'thought accompanied by a cathexis of the indications of thought reality or of the indications of speech is the highest, securest form of cognitive thought-process' (*SE* 1, p.374). In *The Interpretation of Dreams* thought is given a distinctly developmental aim: 'Thinking must aim at freeing itself more and more from exclusive regulation by the unpleasure principle and at restricting the development of affect in thought-activity to the minimum required for acting as a signal' (*SE* 5, p.602).

24. George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, Prelude, ed. by W. J. Harvey (London: Penguin, 1980), p.25.

25. See Dillian Gordon, 'Hélène Rouart in her Father's Study', in *Degas: Images of Women* (Liverpool: Tate, 1992), pp.18-23.

26. Honoré de Balzac *Physiologie du mariage*, *Pléiade* vol 11, pp.907-08.

27. Maxim Gorky, *Reminiscences of Tolstoy, Chekhov and Andreev*, trans. by Katherine Mansfield, S. S. Koteliansky, and Leonard Woolf (London: Hogarth, 1934), p.27.

CHAPTER TWO

'Des pièces neuves et vierges, de véritables morceaux d'art': Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet*

It may be said, indeed, that women are the keystone of the *Comédie humaine.* If the men were taken out, there would be great gaps and fissures; if the women were taken out, the whole fabric would collapse.1

In creating the symbolic links which enliven the character of Eugénie Grandet, Balzac draws on imaginative capacities of sympathy and fear: sympathy for a feminine soul caught in a web spun from naivete and trust, and fear for a fate which, through maintaining an authorial stance, he himself escapes. For Balzac the labour of literature provided a canvas on which conflict and fantasy, deftly delineated, could be worked up boldly into character and plot. By yoking himself to a creative wheel, Balzac was free to unleash powerful impulses which, however perverse in potential, were saved the fate of neurosis through the construction of narratives in which they were liberated. Not so his characters, for whom no such liberation is possible. The contrast is vivid between a brief flowering and slow withering of desire in Eugénie Grandet's story, and the acclaim the novel *Eugénie Grandet* rewarded Balzac: an author who, when *Eugénie Grandet* was published in 1833, was already expanding *La Comédie humaine* from a handful of modest volumes into a capacious compendium of contemporary manners. However staunchly he proclaims socio-political concerns over those of the individual within this project, Balzac's narratives hinge on hairpin turns of subjective interest and psychical defence: no matter what havoc cousin Bette wreaks on Parisian society, it is infantile rivalry that is repeatedly invoked as the burning core of her hostility for Adeline and her motivated disruptions of the family. Likewise, it is not events themselves which conspire to make cousin Bette's life difficult, or her handling of them irrevocably neurotic, it is the fantasies which - provoked by events linked to repressed memories - spark the hysterical reactions which in turn compel further defence.

Yet cousin Bette is a notably successful hysteric, in that what might handicap a less strident personality is turned to her advantage through psychical defences that are adept in their manipulation of external reality. Eugénie Grandet is Bette's muted sister, inclining more toward

Freud's characterization of the hysteric as an inverse work of art, as a negative achievement of creativity, than the extrovert Bette who, despite the prospect of losing everything in tampering with the lives of others, risks just that (*SE* 8, p.73). However sincerely the narrator proposes that an artist of the stature of Raphael would be made rapturous by Eugénie Grandet's physiognomy, as a character Eugénie communicates a tragic combination of wilful impulse, libidinal longing, and inhibited intellectual reasoning. Like Dorothea Brooke in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, Eugénie Grandet epitomizes the fate of that multitude of women who are 'foundress of nothing'.[2] It was Balzac's genius to trace a gradual extinguishing of feminine desire back to a clash between romance and melodrama, as it is played out within a family scenario. The source of this clash lies in suppressed conflicts which surface in Balzac's narratives as hysterical and obsessive features in a range of characters. This is glaring in *Eugénie Grandet*, where the plot itself is minimal: precious little happens to the main characters in terms of external action, apart from the initial accident of their meeting. None the less from the interior of the Grandet home the plot quickly thickens through an interplay of intrigue, deception, and dialogue, in which privileged focus is given less to external incidents than to the fantasies these incidents inspire. In elaborating the fate of characters whose environment operates as pigment to highlight traits of personality, Balzac borrows devices from the theatre to show what occurs when roles begin to slip, like masks, from family members. Within this novel the narrator seems enlivened, alternately, by liberal and conservative impulses, and is thus obliged to pick up the standard of the family each time a revolution of the plot throws it to the ground. Ultimately this perpetual promotion and sundering of the family, and of the heroine within it, undermines Balzac's professed aim of making the family the founding element of society. Nevertheless his commitment to this cause is ceaseless, and is evident in the fine lines which, criss-crossing *Eugénie Grandet*, link reformer and radical, hysteric and obsessive, as well as tragedy and comedy and, occasionally, farce.

In those fits of paternal grandiloquence which, bordering on the insane, are issued by père Goriot and père Grandet alike, the flagrant instigator of conflict is the daughter. In both instances it is the daughter who summarily betrays the father by reckoning his value truly, personally, when the occasion requires his value be accorded divinely, at least socially. In the most overtly dramatic scene of *Eugénie Grandet*, a raving Grandet declares:

> Vous méprisez donc votre père, vous n'avez donc pas confiance en lui, vous ne savez donc pas ce que c'est qu'un père. S'il n'est pas tout pour vous, il n'est rien.3

In crying out against those forces which wrest traditional privileges from his breast, the father implicates the daughter in order, in some sense, to include her in his fall. Prolonged intimacy with

such a father communicates to the daughter sentiments which mix desire and fear, a combination which inflects the heroine's fate in *Eugénie Grandet*. As handmaiden to an ailing monarch, Eugénie Grandet - like Shakespeare's Cordelia before her and Eliot's Romola after her - excels in her effacement of those desires which might upset a filial accord. Despite a provincial quietude Eugénie's story darkens into drama in a flash: this daughter turns hysteric the moment she realizes that the ideals and conscience embodied in père Grandet, ideals thrown into question by a waning of his paternal authority, are yet essential to her own psychical functioning. A father so invested cannot die, except in the literal sense, for to do so would leave the daughter a moral orphan. The fragility and ardour of this filial relation presumes a dynamic frame; within it the daughter supports and complements a vexing father, while the father displays the best and worst attributes of paternity - benevolence and autocracy. A daughter's loyalty to such a father cannot be innocent, for it is inflected with desires of a potency which bans them from consciousness, and is hence fuelled by repressed rather than inhibited impulses. The daughter who entertains a hysterical relation to the father is troubled less by unconscious wishes than by strident ideals which censure the expression of intense wishes. Castigated from within if she pursues pleasures her ego deems wrongful, and weakened in vigour if she neglects a mode of action which aims at the reproduction of pleasure - such is Eugénie's dilemma in this narrative. The anomaly of Eugénie's fate is that her neurotic defences don't break down, becoming manifest neither in symptom nor in an appeal to another. Instead, a disappearance of desire in the heroine follows its repeated frustration, resulting in the establishment of secondary - and seemingly impregnable - defences. But for all this the threat Eugénie represents is a limited one, being that of passive witness to a family romance that is grinding to a halt, literally running out of characters to foster coming generations.

The initial volume of *La Comédie humaine,* in which *Eugénie Grandet* appeared, contains a heterogeneity of characters whose radical division into two camps - devotional and scheming, loving and egoistic, innocent and malign - is obscured by an exuberance of narrative detail. The story of *Eugénie Grandet* opens as it ends, in darkness, with the narrator peering in from the cobbled street into the family's living room. A dense opening chapter works to prepare the stalwart and to alert mere seekers after pleasure; in a test of the capacity to submit to the narrative voice, a tacit line is drawn to separate the hysterical from the obsessive reader. While a potentially hysterical reader is drawn, as if by a lyre, to a masterful authorial voice that bespeaks and commands all, a potentially obsessive reader is tantalized by pecuniary secrets accessible only to those who keep pace with an admired and hated mentor, for whom 'ce langage secret forme en

quelque sort la franc-maçonnerie des passions' (*EG* p.25). The person of Grandet fulsomely accommodates both readerships; evoking hostility in the hysteric and rivalry in the obsessive, Grandet is protected from the hysteric by the workings of the family romance, and secure from the obsessive by a thick dividing wall which screens his every transaction. There is no substance to the power Grandet wields over Saumur and its surroundings, instead his totemic strength lies in manipulating those mental properties which, according to Balzac, are essential to man's fate: 'la memoire, la volupté, l'imagination et le jugement et la faculté d'inventer des rapports'.[4] Grandet is canny rather than educated; alive to shifts of social, domestic, and political economy he is quick to profit, cautious to act. There is, however, one fatal calculation Grandet unwittingly makes, which is to love his daughter unreservedly. Here lies the equivocation which is never truly resolved: between Eugénie, unique and passive receptacle of Grandet's love, measured in gold coins; and Eugénie, adored child of a proud sire, actively groomed to enhance paternal splendour. This split, between Grandet's magnaminity and covetousness, vulnerability and shrewishness, concentrates a debate over inheritance which centres on the relative strength of emotional and blood ties. While père Grandet accepts the generational code which supports the transfer of property within the family, he is at the same time the self-interested potentate who shuns obligations of affection out of hand. To the degree that Grandet's paternal affections are blind his greed is too; for, in both, precious little heed is given to the integrity of the object toward which these feelings are directed.

When the narrator brings together a stultifying environment and a scatter of domestic intrigues in the opening scenes of *Eugénie Grandet*, the text which results reflects the heroine's response to her cousin's loud, unexpected knock at the Grandet door: excitement displaces dull routine, dialogue edges out description, and the narrator's historical summary gives way to the characters' direct perceptions. The entrance of Charles, signalling a threshhold in the narrative, is both explicable and necessary in terms of the heroine's latent wishes. This unknown cousin triggers desires in Eugénie which, after a prolonged latency, are ripe for their awakening. From this perspective Charles Grandet operates less as an independent character than as a psychical function, to remind the heroine of sentiments and ideas that are unavailable to her as a result of repression. Having come of age in a family characterized by stasis and compliance, Eugénie is likened by the narrator 'à ces oiseaux victimes du haut prix auquel on les met et qu'ils ignorent, se trouvait traquée' (*EG* p.49). Protected from the unscrupulous financial profits which sustain the Grandet household, in this metaphor Eugénie and her mother are twinned in their ignorance of

the world. Theirs is a loyal and unquestioning submission to père Grandet, an ex-barrel-maker who presides over his estates and dependents with the acuity of a restless monarch. Among the few townsfolk who pass into the Grandet's living room, only mother and daughter are unaware of the fiscal interests which grounds their invitation:

> Eugénie et sa mère ne savaient rien de la fortune de Grandet, elles n'estimaient les choses de la vie qu'à la lueur de leurs pâles idées, et ne prisaient ni ne méprisaient l'argent, accoutumées qu'elles étaient à s'en passer. Leurs sentiments, froissés à leur insu, mais vivaces, le secret de leur existence, en faisaient des exceptions curieuses dans cette réunion de gens dont la vie était purement matérielle. (*EG* p.49)

To be oblivious to damage sustained by the psyche is, in a sense, proof of psychological suffering: anaesthesia befalls all those who are incapable of finding words for that which experience effects in them. It is then the consequences of such mute suffering that Eugénie's story comes to embody. Amid the gloom of the house in Saumur the narrator throws light on a feminine naivete indistinguishable from ignorance, a form of 'not knowing' that is potentially more harmful than any material want experienced by the heroine. Yet a further consideration, and it is one which is never resolved in the narrative, is the degree to which Eugénie helps fashion her own noose, and this in unconscious sympathy with maternal fate as it is exemplified by Madame Grandet.

As variously expounded in Balzac's narratives, collapse is always in the offing when an alliance based on passive feminine sentiments and a pulsing masculine pragmatism, strains to breaking point. In Balzac's narrative universe once man and woman have assumed the roles of husband and wife, and for that matter daughter, a form of psychical combat is the ineluctable outcome. The common result of conjugal battles is the resounding defeat of the woman: in the *Physiologie du mariage*, the narrator describes how 'la femme mariée offrit alors en France le spectacle d'une reine asservie, d'une esclave à la fois libre et prisonnière' (*Pléiade* vol.11, p.1003). The fate of Madame Grandet and her daughter, for whom any increase in awareness is attended by an access of suffering, is thus prefigured by their kinship with 'ces oiseaux victimes'. In the treatise on marriage, Balzac's young narrator splits the concept 'woman' into alien parts, so as to ensure that the woman of myth and the woman of common parlance are kept distinct:

> C'était des créatures aussi incomplètes que les lois qui les gouvernaient: considérées par les uns comme un être intermédiaire entre l'homme et les animaux, comme ue bête maligne que les lois ne sauraient garrotter de trop de liens et que la nature avait destinée avec tant d'autres au bon plaisir des humains; considérées par d'autres comme un ange exilé, source de bonheur et d'amour, comme la seule créature qui répondît aux sentiments de l'homme et de qui l'on devait venger les misères par une idolâtrie. (*Plèiade* vol. 11, p.1004)

Women suffer for their constitution by incomplete laws, which relegate some of them to reside

with the animals while promoting others to companions of the gods. At one extreme a beast of burden bred solely to service man's pleasures, and at the other a figure of angelic devotion who reconciles man to mortality and compensates for the partiality of human relations, 'la femme' is reflected in the conditions of her making: 'La femme fut donc ce que les circonstances et les hommes la firent, au lieu d'être ce que le climat et les institutions la devaient faire' (*Pléiade* 11, p.1004). This split is essential to *La Comédie humaine*, generating a symbolic code which destines man and woman for separate spheres, such that only a conflagration between them promises their final synthesis.

In the early scenes of *Eugénie Grandet* an ideal femininity, characterized by ignorant suffering, is the object of the narrator's admiration, and this for its qualities of self-effacing purity and selflessness. The naming of characters confirms this: within the Grandet household the wife goes without a forename, the bovine servant does without a family name, the master boasts the superordinate 'Grandet', while the daughter is introduced last, minus her patronymic. Grandet's position is however far from omniscient; it is his mistake to believe that in giving a gold coin to his daughter each birthday he is in effect investing it, miraculously transferring his own fiscal passions to her. Instead, in failing to communicate the system of economy which organizes his passions, Grandet contributes to the ignorance of his daughter as powerfully as her straitened living conditions add to it. This paternal neglect is attributable not to oversight but to lasciviousness: 'Grandet aimait à lui voir entasser. N'était-ce pas mettre son argent d'une caisse dans une autre, et, pour ainsi dire, élever à la brochette l'avarice de son héritière' (*EG* p.40). As long as Grandet believes his own fortune increases through the promotion of his daughter's, anxiety cannot touch him. Part of Grandet's error in this calculation is to reckon the genetic link between mother and daughter to be one of equivalence, an error which is encouraged by his wife's wholesale submission to his authority.

In Balzac's *Physiologie du mariage*, both the dignity and the subordination of women results from their fidelity to the marriage contract: 'les deux principes de la servitude et de la soveraineté des femmes restèrent donc en présence enrichis l'un et l'autre de nouvelles armes' (*Pléiade* vol. 11, p.1003). Freud will echo this opinion in ''Civilized' Sexual Illness and Modern Nervous Illness'(1908), when he makes masculine egoism and feminine virtue constitutive of neurotic suffering within marriage. Both these views, of Balzac and of Freud, illuminate the obscurity of a provincial home in which husband and wife somatically express their liaison: Grandet in the yellowed whites of his eyes, Madame Grandet in the jaundiced pallor of her cheeks. Whereas

various shocks of circumstance fail to diminish the voracity of Grandet's impulses, Madame Grandet is manifestly less robust: together they epitomize what Freud observes in the bourgeois milieu of his own time, namely that 'in many families the men are healthy, but from a social point of view immoral to an undesirable degree, while the women are high-minded and over-refined, but severely neurotic' (*SE* 9, p.192). Thus at the beginning and the end of the nineteenth century, in a fictionalized Saumur as in Vienna, Balzac and Freud depict a world in which feminine virtue stems from the radical suppression of libidinal impulse. Indicative less of goodness than of illness, such a condition results from a neglect of the relation between egoism and sexuality - in their widest senses. Freud calls attention to an endemic failure of satisfaction in his hysterical patients, not only for its quality of unpleasure but, once implicated in secondary aims, for its pathology:

> A certain amount of direct sexual satisfaction seems to be indispensable for most organisations, and a deficiency in this amount, which varies from individual to individual, is visited by phenomena which, on account of their detrimental effects on functioning and their subjective quality of unpleasure, must be regarded as an illness. (*SE* 9, p.188)

Here it is not simply a lack of sexual satisfaction which exacerbates illness; its 'detrimental effects' on consciousness are also deemed harmful. Madame Grandet's existence, in a world where her and her daughter's feelings are continuously 'froissés à leur insu', is evocative of unpleasures and inhibitions which differ only in degree from neurosis. Within this context, of Balzac's Saumur and of Freud's Vienna, the semantics of illness undergo a subtle shift from an organic to a sexually-inspired disorder, the cause of which is attributed less to the nervous system or bad humours, than to sexual dissatisfaction and moral rectitude. Thus the virtue which is ascribed to Madame Grandet is a reflection not of worldly beneficence but of extreme psychical inhibition: baldly stated, of the thwarting of desires by the ego. In *Eugénie Grandet* it is not so much virtue, as the conditions under which virtue is constituted, that beg examination. In *Père Goriot* the narrator enjoins: 'les sentiments nobles poussés à l'absolu produisent des résultats semblables à ceux des grands vices'. From this perspective extreme virtue and extreme vice may be seen as companiable traits (*Pléiade* vol. 3, p.).

Before Eugénie's birth - and the novel's opening - Madame Grandet endowed a substantial fortune to a husband who, when this transfer is repeated in his daughter's gift to her lover, is too furious to recognize the connection. In this melodramatic return to the parents through the actions of the child, the author highlights the circular workings of the bourgeois family. According to the codes of early nineteenth-century provincial life in France, Eugénie's destiny is to be married, not to marry. In a society where laws of profit and loss prevail, where the model for womankind recommends a submission to established mores, Eugénie is tagged from outset as

the passive partner in any social contract. The question is scarcely 'Who is Eugénie Grandet going to marry?' but rather 'Who is going to marry Eugénie Grandet?'. The vexation of this query, in relation to which the novel unfolds, depends greatly on the value of the said woman. Is a woman variously dismissed as 'poor child', 'rich heiress', and 'lonely girl' by narrator, townsfolk, and local gentry finally to be reckoned rich or poor? Is Eugénie's worth intrinsic, being bound up with what she is able to give and offer of herself, or extrinsic, dependent on her provision of inheritance and reproductive potential? This unspoken query fuels a plot which could be reduced to a 'combat secret entre les Cruchot et les des Grassins, dont le prix était la main d'Eugénie Grandet' (*EG* p.31). This prize is equivocally valued, particularly by those who stand to gain most from it. Madame des Grassins, risking an indiscretion in her caricature of the Grandet family to the newcomer Charles, declares: 'Votre oncle est un grigou qui ne pense qu'à ses provins, votre tante est une devoté qui ne sait pas coudre deux idées, et votre cousine est une petite sotte, sans éducation, commune, sans dot, et qui passe sa vie à raccommoder des torchons' (*EG* p.59).

At the heart of this debate on value inhere three gifts which, in their symbolic punctuation of womanhood, represent Eugénie's fantasies of futurity. Linked to genetic and cultural values, these gifts, in their transfer from parents to child, become imbued with sentimental value. Such sentiments contrast markedly with the attitudes of Charles who, in the name of higher goals, comes to disregard - at least temporarily - external signs of worth. Significantly, it is only after the entry of Charles into the Grandet home that Eugénie begins to express desires which require activity and judgement for their fulfilment. This process is however limited by the heroine's sentimental attachment to objects: thus when a suitor gives her 'une boîte à ouvrage' on her birthday, Eugénie maidenly blushes her thanks, rather than expressing it openly in accordance with the value of the gift. In contrast, the more discerning narrator unflinchingly passes off this same object as 'véritable marchandise de pacotille' (*EG* p.47). Eugénie's next gift, introduced second in the narrative, is an heirloom from her maternal grandmother: 'une grosse bourse en velours rouge à glands d'or, et bordée de cannetille usée' (*EG* p.136). This purse, the strings of which her father to his chagrin forgets she holds, is a talisman of Eugénie's sexual integrity. While Eugénie magnaminously empties its treasures into her cousin's lap, Charles is more circumspect in his dealings, in that he accepts her treasures in exchange for the loan and not the gift of his mother's dressing-case. In all these ways Eugénie's trust is presented as naive, as based on romantic fantasy. And it is the longing which issues from this fantasy which is transformed into resistance, as soon as the workings of the plot begin to obstruct the desires that the heroine's romance generates.

All these gifts are charged, for Eugénie, with a libidinal interest superior to their actual worth. In a transcendent sense Charles himself is a gift to the heroine: as he crosses the threshold, an eagle-eyed Madame des Grassins watches Eugénie's furtive glances reach 'un *crescendo* d'étonnement ou de curiosité' (*EG* p.52). Later, through a sleight of the imagination, Charles slips into Sleeping Beauty's chamber, so that Eugénie comes upon him sprawled in a sleep from which she is compelled to wake him. Eugénie's attraction to her cousin would appear to have its roots in narcissism: in Freud's characterization of this process, an object thus chosen reflects 'all the unfulfilled but possible futures to which we still like to cling in phantasy, all the strivings of our ego which adverse circumstances have crushed, and all our suppressed acts of volition' (*SE* 12, p.236). The heroine's longing for her cousin stems from a yearning for things that never actually happened, yet assuredly and wishfully might have done. This longing is less for Charles himself than for those attributes which shape him, for the fine possessions which suggest, to his less adorned cousin, phallic nobility. Eugénie's assiduous attentions to her cousin open floodgates which, initially set up against infantile impulses, made for a prolonged latency. Yet this watershed has complex effects; for in showering her gold over her cousin, while keeping the purse which girlishly consecrated it, Eugénie introduces a split which undermines her own value: 'Voici, dit-elle en ouvrant la bourse, les économies d'une pauvre fille qui n'a besoin de rien' (*EG* p.138).

This act of generosity, expressive of self-abandon, denudes the maternal velvet purse and its contents of value: thenceforth Eugénie neither wants, deserves, nor reflects substantive value, because she has given over everything with which her desire is figured to another. The act of giving away her coins, while keeping the purse which held them, implies that it is Eugénie's fertility that has been donated - and this to a cousin who prizes the coins but cares nothing for the purse. Like a child who hands over its first gift to someone it wants to impress with its love, it is inconceivable to Eugénie that Charles should refuse her coins or that her donation might compromise her. In this burst of generosity Eugénie humbles herself before her seraphic cousin, yet at the same time confirms an erotic claim through her gift to him. Eugénie's mistake is as fundamental as it is noble, in that she fails to distinguish between a first gift, with its narcissistic and wishful origins, and a symbolic gift based on inherited ties. What Eugénie gives away as a gift is reciprocated in a loan by her cousin: whereas the heroine puts no terms on her bequest, Charles assigns her as caretaker of his treasure. In so far as Eugénie's future is jeopardized by her secret gift, her cousin's ambitions are realized through it. In her secret betrothal and donation to Charles Eugénie effectively robs Grandet, who holds the conviction that in bestowing rare coins on his

daughter, he is putting 'son argent d'une caisse dans une autre' (*EG* p.40). Regardless of her naivete and suffering Eugénie's actions are calculated; as the narrator observes, 'instruitée, la vertu calcule aussi bien que le vice'. On the level of interpretation, whereas Charles assigns his mother's memory to his lover's safe keeping, Eugénie donates that which signifies her father to her cousin: thus despite an incongruity of value between the gifts, an equivalence on the level of fantasy is reached. Moreover, Eugénie inherits her aunt's love for her son by intercepting it and taking possession of its 'case', and it is this - rather than her bequest to Charles - which constitutes a deceit of her own parents.

From the moment of his entrance, Charles appears to possess something Eugénie does not. Although this is obvious in the treasures that surround Charles, his underlying attraction to the heroine is explained by his embodiment of perverse pleasures. To qualify a pleasure as perverse is to describe rather than to evaluate it: in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* Freud includes in the category of the perverse, all those 'instincts which would be described as *perverse* in the widest sense of the word if they could be expressed directly in phantasy and action without being diverted from consciousness' (*SE* 7, p.165). The caveat, 'without being diverted from consciousness', is crucial to the hysterical scenario which, in its banishment of impulses the ego considers retrograde, may be more or less unconsciously perverse. In Eugénie's first glimpse of Charles she is struck by his femininity: 'la vue de son cousin fit sourdre en son coeur les émotions de fine volupté que causent à un jeune homme les fantastiques figures de femmes dessinées par Westall dans les Keepsake anglais' (*EG* p.56). Eugénie's astonishment derives from her unconscious identification with a phallic love object, an identification which subordinates the object's sex to its glossy and polymorphous attributes. The renunciation of the heroine's inheritance includes, it would seem, a perverse tendency. Although Eugénie's gift is total - 'depuis la scène de nuit pendant laquelle la cousine donna son trésor au cousin, son coeur avait suivi le trésor', her fascination for Charles's treasures appears possessive in a narcissistic sense which, in its extreme, borders on the perverse (*EG* p.144).

From the moment her cousin appears, 'une créature descendue de quelque région séraphique', Eugénie is struck by a desire to 'toucher la peau blanche de ces jolis gants fins' that her cousin wears (*EG* p.56). A desire to brush against the gloves of this seraph is also shared by the narrator, whose admiration for 'la fraîcheur de ses gants gris', suggests that the desire to brush against this object is enough to alter its clothing from white to grey (*EG* p.54). Eugénie's attraction to her cousin is mixed up with her desire for his possession; a further indication, if any were

needed, that even the most generous impulses may harbour something more self-seeking. Many psychologists, Balzac and Freud among them, concede that no act is purely selfless, indeed that every action communicates a personally vested message and aim, whether or not that aim becomes conscious. Freud further supposes that it is the conscious realization of such aims which significantly contribute to psychical progress. It would seem that it is only after internalizing the phallic ideal invoked by her cousin, that Eugénie begins to loosen the affective ties which bind her to parental figures. When Eugénie rushes to Charles's side, she is convinced she and her cousin share the same thoughts: 'Eugénie se croyait déjà seule capable de comprendre les goûts et les idées de son cousin' (*EG* p.57). Charles soon takes up the position of sibling in relation to Eugénie, a movement which legitimates, in the heroine's eyes, her affections for him. Munificence borders on promiscuity when Eugénie, keen to rationalize her donation to Charles, dissolves family and hence sexual distinctions: 'Un cousin est presque un frère, vous pouvez bien emprunter la bourse de votre soeur' (*EG* p.138). In such ways Eugénie's lightning acts, and her rationalizations of them, stimulate a narrative which drives the plot onward.

To choose a love object that figures what one would have liked to be, in a phase of development renowned for its phallicism - narcissism, is to entertain complex relations with that object. By projecting on to Charles her own desires, and by addressing Charles as a brother, Eugénie ushers in a more sinuous mode of relating to others. The presence of Charles is catalyst an ideal function in Eugénie: 'Elle éprouva un besoin passionné de faire quelque chose pour lui: quoi? elle n'en savait rien' (*EG* p.77). This confusion results from Eugénie's attempts to identify with an effeminate cousin who boasts diminutive hands and fastidious wiles, who reflects to an aesthetic ideal which Eugénie, educated in privation and coarsened by provinciality, cannot - without recourse to fantasy - herself sustain. In a dawn contemplation of her reflection, inspired by daydreams of Charles, Eugénie is baptized into conscious awareness through an experience of self-criticism: 'Elle se leva brusquement, se mit devant son miroir, et s'y regarda comme un auteur de bonne foi contemple son oeuvre pour se critiquer, et se dire des injures à lui-même' (*EG* p.75). Eugénie's perceptions are not honed by arousal; quickened perhaps, but distorted also, by an experience in which she observes herself in the mirror as if a bystander looking on. In this dawn awakening, a sensation of self-consciousness separates Eugénie from those fantasies which preceded it.

This division is marked by a mythical moment of satisfaction, in which the satisfying experience which first gave rise to it is lost forever, and can only be recalled in memory. It is mythical because it

is separated from the present by an experience of dissatisfaction, an experience which is motivated by a desire to renew what may never be renewed by conscious mental effort. In the moment of satisfaction, the memory of the pleasure-giving object, the memory of the effort expended in momentarily possessing it, and the imaginative anticipation of its pleasurable renewal are brought together. Far from renewing a past satisfaction via her gaze into the mirror, Eugénie is split by an operation which presents her as other to herself; seeing within her reflection the gaze of a more discerning other. From this time on Eugénie will seek to please rather than to be pleased; equally her concern will be to be worthy of love rather than to cultivate objects worthy of her own love. In this act, modesty, 'ou mieux la crainte', is born (*EG* p.75). Modesty, the fear of being unworthy of affection, and shame, the resentment of the loved object's scrutiny, are experienced as a single emotion by Eugénie. Although the modesty Charles inspires in Eugénie is hailed as honourable, the narrator deems it 'une des premières vertus de l'amour', its weakening taint comes to colour Eugénie's story as the novel progresses. From this scene forward the heroine's wish is to resemble her cousin so as to be sure of pleasing him, a priority which suggests that her suit shall succeed to the degree his narcissism is gratified. Rather than love at first sight this is more akin to desire at first sight, with a flowering of Eugénie's erotic interest being checked by her penchant for concealment.

Two contrary trends are thus established in Eugénie: a warm fluid longing to be one with the enlivening object, and a keen sense of subordination to a superior other. Eugénie's hope that she will be exalted by the loved object and her accompanying fear lest she be unworthy of it, thus increase in line with her attraction to Charles. This movement inflects the narrative rhythm, in which long, pendulous description gives way to short, loaded interchanges, with emphasis being given to the lovers' exchanges rather than the descriptive narrative which frames them. A mental screen is erected to mark this burgeoning of self-consciousness in Eugénie. The morning after Charles's arrival Eugénie imagines her thoughts displayed on her forehead, for all to see; while after an experience of profound criticism of her father, Eugénie realizes that dissimulation is her only recourse if she wants to protect Charles from her father's threats. Hysterical inhibition, provoked by the fear of violating a loved object - here Eugénie's father - at the level of thought or wish, stalls the transformation of potent impulses into benign verbal associations. Yet the daughter's psyche has undergone a shift. Because of her identification with Charles Eugénie experiences only contempt for Grandet's callousness, such that when her father refuses to wear mourning for his brother, she 'leva les yeux au ciel sans mot dire' (*EG* p.104). A situation which might elicit verbal outrage is thus expressed in a behavioural sign. Indirection comes to mark Eugénie's relations

with her father following her identification with Charles. And yet this fraternal identification, sustained and directed by erotic wishes, proves inadequate when it comes to confronting the implications of the heroine's libidinal choice.

Everything of import that occurs to Eugénie, occurs 'pour le première fois', a refrain which gestures to a narrative present which the heroine is forever about to enter. Enlivened by empathy for her eminently pleasing cousin, Eugénie overcomes the inhibitions which compliance with her parents had fostered. In haste to embellish Charles's room, Eugénie is momentarily halted when her mother declares: 'Mais, que dira ton père?'; the daughter's spontaneous, 'il n'y fera pas attention', makes her parent's concern peripheral to her actions (*EG* p.58). Parallel with her compassion for Charles, fate's victim, emerges contempt for Grandet; indication that a more pleasing fraternal ideal has taken the place of a paternal one. Yet at an unconscious level Eugénie's excitement remains in loyal concert with her father, such that in her defiance of him she propounds their resemblance more forcibly. Although the bodily presence of her cousin, and more crucially those attributes which adorn him, awaken in Eugénie an interest arrested in provincial inertia, the channels into which her interest course reflect Grandet's attachment to objects. A kinship is struck between Grandet's owl-like covetousness, his desire to 'choyer, caresser, couver, cuver, cercler son d'or', and Eugénie's impulse to penetrate Charles's room and there to inspect and fondle his treasures (*EG* p.69). This affinity lies less in the objects to which father and daughter are drawn, than the intensity with which they are valorized. Far from genetic inheritance such lust bears more tellingly on wishful aspects of Eugénie which, having evaded the example of her mother's decrepitude, reflect Grandet's galvanizing of objects which are calculated to obtain pleasure.

This reading is confirmed by the 'primal scene' on the landing, when Eugénie spies on her father's midnight labours with Nanon, withdrawing noiselessly after meeting her father's unseeing stare. What Eugénie recognizes in this non-meeting of gazes, is how little her father can see when preoccupied with material gain. It is however only when Eugénie overhears her father stutter that he would sooner throw his daughter into the Loire than give her to his nephew, that a permanent split in her affections occurs. The sadism implicit in this blast by Grandet evokes an image of destitution in Eugénie: 'les lointaines espérances qui pour elle commençaient à poindre dans son coeur fleurirent soudain, se réalisèrent et formèrent un faisceau de fleurs qu'elle vit coupées et gisant à terre'. In addition an element of hysterical conversion occurs when, on returning from the river, the flutterings of the heroine's heart are taken up by her legs: 'elle revint

tremblant sur ses jambes' (*EG* p.83). Eugénie's crisis is caused not so much by the severity of her father's wrath, or the seriousness of his threat, but by the sudden dashing of hopes which, created in fantasy and hence devoid of defence, collapse under the first sign of attack from without. What causes a pathological reaction 'sur ses jambes' is not the awakening of memories of satisfaction, in which her love for Charles is requited, but the jettisoning of wishes within - imaginatively 'gisant à terre'. From this moment Grandet's insensitivity inures Eugénie to his influence, and increases her compassion for the bereaved Charles. An imaginative coupling in her cousin of splendour and grief, of fortune and loss, is an amalgam which acts powerfully on Eugénie, helping to transform attraction into love: 'cette échappée d'un luxe vu à travers la douleur lui rendit Charles encore plus intéressant, par contraste peut-être' (*EG* p.101). Eugénie's love is thus fired by compassion for her cousin's misfortunes; a sentiment which makes her, in the narrator's eyes, 'autant femme que jeune fille'. This sequence of reverie, conscious fantasy, and its dissolution anticipates Freud's discussion of the passage of sexual tension into psychosexual ideas in the 'Project for a Scientific Psychology', and in particular of what can thwart it. Instead of excitation producing a sexual affect that stimulates a specific action, a movement in which perceptual excitement is bound to mnemic images in such a way that its reproduction is secure, the excitation retreats at the threshold of soma and psyche and becomes manifest as unconsciously motivated anxiety or depression. Similarly Eugénie has her hopes both enlivened and then dashed by the excitement Charles incites in her; the heroine's actions only come to a standstill when her ability to translate fantasy into reality is hindered.

In the breakfast scenes that follow her cousin's arrival, Charles and Eugénie Grandet respond divergently to the same event - the death of Charles's father. Although both cousins grasp who has been lost long before they appreciate what has been lost in this death, it is Eugénie who is imaginatively preoccupied with the position of loss. Whereas Eugénie is anguished, Charles is stunned, and the romance between them that ensues is a mixture of Eugénie's melancholy projections and Charles's gratitude for the goodwill shown him. Whereas her cousin's sudden appearance in Saumur provokes a narcissistic flood in Eugénie, the news of her uncle's suicide provokes an Oedipal unrest. Within minutes of hearing the news of it Eugénie learns to count, to estimate her father's worth. After a moment's consideration of her father's financial position, Eugénie announces to her stupefied mother, 'Mais alors, papa doit être riche' (*EG* p.99). Although this deduction marks a defining move away from her scarcely numerate mother, traits from both parents feature in Eugénie's response to her uncle's tragedy. Eugénie's status as an only child makes her dependent on the conscious values of her parents as well as on the

unprofessed ideas and feelings which underlie them. From her father Eugénie inherits an unworldly sense of economics, while from her mother she receives a distorted sense of sin. Sugar has atavistic value in Grandet's world, such that in failing to adjust its value to a falling market, he displays a blunted sensitivity to reality. In Grandet's view sugar is scarce and hence an indulgence no matter how dramatically its price plummets; likewise cutting up sugar is for him a private pleasure, in which he may fashion his worth into ever smaller lumps.

The sensuousness of objects is for Grandet independent of commercial value, a propensity which inclines his daughter to covet rather than to value objects. For as long as Eugénie is unable to judge aesthetically, and thus to subordinate a purely subjective response, her evaluation of objects relies on the standard of an external ideal. To possess an object of value in an autonomous way requires a free play of impulse, such that original satisfactions, inspired by early love objects, are transferred on to a contemporary object. Should this free play be obstructed by defence, possessive interests remain fixed to original objects, being blocked from their transfer on to new objects. This inspires an imaginative 'all or nothing': either Eugénie possesses everything of value, all of the love and the fantasies which originate in her attachment to her parents; or she is devoid of value, being entirely without the capacity to invest the world and herself with erotic interest. As a result Eugénie, and the hysteric she exemplifies, clutches at objects, being as confused by the prospect of possessing the object she wishes for, as she is made anxious by any hint of its loss. This anxiety is linked to the hysteric's fear that she has already lost that which she most prizes: originary satisfaction. As a consequence Eugénie hoards rather than assimilates the qualities of objects; as if finding nowhere to keep them inside her, she is compelled to have them about her. Eugénie's relations to objects she covets is based on a split between the sentimental and the material, which means that her coins only become materially valuable once she has donated them to her cousin. This tendency is brought into relief when Eugénie loses Charles as an object of love yet retains his possessions. These keepsakes - kept for the sake of keeping - take on hallucinatory qualities; hence every day Eugénie uses a silver thimble to keep alive the memory of the scene in which her lover gave it to her mother.

Eugénie's absorption of her mother's concept of sin is another instance of a psychical inheritance which goes wrong in its transfer from parent to child. For Madame Grandet, religion operates as a prophylactic to rebellion: as long as she obeys her confessor's injunction that she submit to her husband's will, she is guaranteed protection from marital disharmony. According to this stipulation, it would not only be wrong for Madame Grandet to query her stake in Grandet's

wealth, it would be sinful. Despite aligning herself with a religious orthodoxy which suppresses hostility and promotes righteousness in its stead, Madame Grandet is prey to anxiety, and it is this anxiety which fuels her extravagant deferral to her husband's authority. Madame Grandet's response to the news of her brother-in-law's downfall is to interpret, in adherence to her husband's views, the suicide as transgressive - however keenly she may secretly identify with her brother-in-law's moral martyrdom. In contrast, for Grandet his brother's act is worse than robbery, being that of an enemy who holds the ultimate weapon: his own disappearance. Caught between conflicting interpretive models, Eugénie neither grasps the legal distinction between an intentional and involuntary bankruptcy, nor notes her mother's slippage from a concept of error to that of sin. Eugénie is however keenly sensitive to her parents' contrary attitudes to the matter of death. Whereas the miser Grandet speaks on behalf of all those materialists whom the narrator deprecates for moving eternity into the present, with one eye on its profitable conservation, Madame Grandet appeals to a heaven which promises a release from her suffering on earth. Meantime a silent testimony to death lies in a darkened corner of the garden: 'le tombeau d'un chevalier enterré par sa veuve au temps des croisades' (*EG* p.74). If Eugénie senses little agreement between her parents over what death signifies, it is hardly surprising that her response to it is divided; nor perhaps that on reaching maturity she should fail to render her own life in the affirmative. Adrift between a mother's self-effacing servitude and a father's unyielding egotism, Eugénie comes to respond to the deaths in her own life with an apprehension laced with despair - a far cry from the virtuous forbearance the Saumur townsfolk see fit to assign her.

Charles influences Eugénie's affective life by squaring off the triangular family relations which existed on his arrival, thus effecting a shift from hysteria to melancholy in the heroine. As a rapid narrative pace slows to an elegiac rhythm, Eugénie, in a narrowing of erotic potential, begins a measured descent - smoothed by her embrace of the role of daughter - into pathos. Whereas Charles aligns himself with an active sense of destiny by demolishing affective links to the past, Eugénie, far from exploding the family complex in which she participates, adjusts herself to its break up. By refusing to identify with a debtor father, Charles frees himself to kill the father on an Oedipal level, a gesture which releases him for independent, ruthless strivings. In contrast Eugénie remains loyal to her creditor father, her affections fixed by the passive aims entailed by filial duty. The hysterical daughter is doubly inhibited: in her neither aggressive nor libidinal impulses are projected on to parental figures, instead they rebound on her when she outwardly denies them. Without a supply of psychical energy of her own Eugénie's readiest source lies in hysterical identification: either with those like her mother whose hopes are crushed before

reaching consciousness; or unconsciously with those, most unlike herself, who dare to translate their desires - however perverse in origin - into worldly ambitions.

It is only after the collapse of Eugénie's passion for Charles that Balzac's heroine looks to a world beyond her own for solace; only with the advent of loneliness does she, in sympathy with her mother, invest her reduced hopes in a higher world which transcends human conflict. Simultaneous with these religious yearnings in the heroine, the narrator questions his own capacity to represent the complex meanings which constitute individual character, and derides those narratives which replace a slow diligent plotting of psychical reality with sweeping general descriptions. Alive to the criticism that the careful record of a single day in his heroine's life may seem overworked, the narrator praises a psychological model which demands such detail. In the narrator's opinion, the fleeting diurnal hours so painstakingly recounted in these early chapters are crucial:

> Ainsi se passa la journée solonnelle qui devait peser sur toute la vie de la riche et pauvre héritière dont le sommeil ne fut plus aussi complet ni aussi pur qu'il l'avait été jusqu'alors. Assez souvent certaines actions de la vie humaine paraissent, littérairement parlant, invraisemblables, quoique vraies. Mais ne serait-ce pas qu'on omet presque toujours de répandre sur nos déterminations spontanées une sorte de lumière psychologique, en n'expliquant pas les raisons mystérieusement conçues qui les ont nécessitées? Peut-être la profonde passion d'Eugénie devrait-elle être analysée dans ses fibrilles les plus délicates; car elle devint, diraient quelques railleurs, une maladie, et influença toute son existence. Beaucoup de gens aiment mieux nier les dénouements, que de mesurer la force des liens, des noeuds, des attaches qui soudent secrètement un fait à un autre dans l'ordre moral. Ici donc le passé d'Eugénie servira, pour les observateurs de la nature humaine, de garantie à la naïveté de son irréflexion et à la soudaineté des effusions de son âme. (*EG* pp.106-07)

In this pivotal passage, the psychological frame through which the rest of Eugénie's story will be told, is set up. Only by shedding light on 'ses fibrilles les plus délicates', can the narrator foreground the conditions which might comprehend Eugénie's future as a consequence of meaningfully linked instants, rather than as a shadowy dance of fate. An admirer of Richardson's *Clarissa*, Balzac refuses to absolve the author of the creative labour required to represent even the slightest of psychological events. Within the novel it is the narrator's work to animate minute links which may or may not reach consciousness in the heroine, and to fashion from such fragments a narrative coherence which might satisfy the most demanding reader. The only valid account of the passion that became, for Eugénie, 'une maladie, et influença toute son existence', would thus be an analysis to its tiniest roots of 'la force des liens, des noeuds, des attaches qui soudent secrètement un fait à un autre dans l'ordre moral'. The delicacy of the links that maintain Eugénie's 'maladie' are explained by their secondary nature, and their tenuousness guarantees that what underlies them remains obscure. The narrator's aspiration to communicate a

psychological coherence through a commitment to inclusiveness is unsustainable at the level of narrative; although of course Joyce would do his utmost to achieve it in *Ulysses*. As attentive as Balzac's account of this single day is, it can never record all that happens, nor can it imaginatively represent Eugénie's innermost thoughts while at the same time standing back to comment on them.

Despite these difficulties, it is possible to see that some of the mystery which attaches to the succession of moments that together constitute Eugénie's life, lies in the peculiar force with which she resists change of any kind. To characterize the psyche's tendency to maintain a psychical mode of functioning, whether or not it produces pleasure, Freud introduced the concept of secondary gain. In this mode of psychical functioning, whatever becomes 'enlisted in the service of external motives' is held on to tenaciously, for as 'long as it is uncertain whether reality will offer [...] anything better' (*SE* 11, p.49). For as long as nothing better presents itself, in exchange for the substitutive sexual satisfactions Eugénie has secured through depression and reaction-formation, the filigree links which support 'toute son existence' will remain in fixed positions. In representing this existence the narrator advocates a narrative frame which favours description over explanation, a close analysis of thoughts and actions - regardless of whether they culminate in events, and a scrutiny of those psychical processes which, grounded in experience, form traits of character. These are the qualities for which Henry James chooses to commend Balzac: 'nothing appealed to him more than to show *how* we all are, and how we are placed and built-in for being so. What befalls us is but another name for the way our circumstances press upon us - so that an account of what befalls us is an account of our circumstances'.[5] The narrator's herculean task in recounting the slim fortunes of Eugénie Grandet is thus to record every action, mood, expression, and hesitation which renders the heroine's life explicable. It is of course not without irony that this aspiration is a feature of one of the more modest, in terms of narrative scope and length, of Balzac's works.

In Freud's early formulations on the psyche, the unravelling of individual experience rests on two factors: the concept of quantity, which relates to psychical pressure, and quality, which relates to memory and meaning. Freud assumed that an accretion of psychical encounters, made sense of through force and meaning, constitute the psyche; and that through them concepts like personality and fortune may be understood. In the preceding quotation Balzac's narrator highlights a similar tension, between the ambition to tell all, which delineates a smoothly determined character in line with a sequential past, and the constraints of a narrative form in which

characters keep escaping into vignette and ellipsis. Empirical observation will not do; it is only with 'une sorte de lumière psychologique' that opacities which challenge summary conclusions are thrown into relief. But even under such a light the hysteric is always a vignette, a collection of traits; she is necessarily the exception to the empirical rule. For hysteria eludes every frame, whether literary or scientific, which is set up to isolate it: hysteria can never be a sum of its parts, predominantly because hysteria is an effect of the connections between actions, events, and traits and thus cannot be reduced in any simple way to phenomenal elements.

The tension which enlivens Balzac's text is between a representation of the heroine as a cluster of traits, and the narrator's reluctance to reduce the heroine to a type. To promote the hysteric as a type, and to sidestep the moment by moment elaboration of situations in which hysterical traits arise, is to valorize a generalizing account of psychical phenomena. Instead of depicting hysterical conflict as a single feature of the heroine, a classificatory model identifies the traits which result from such conflict as constitutive of character. To refer to a character as hysterical is then to take the narrative emphasis off those situations which hysterical character traits are a response to. Hysterical relations are not the by-product of a hysterical structure, as the designation of particular traits as hysterical would suggest; rather they are affective demonstrations which overstep the boundaries of the individual psyches caught up in them. Within hysterical relations the intimate space between individuals takes on a life of its own, becomes hystericized, through the activation of otherwise dispossessed traits of each partner. That Eugénie Grandet appears to Saumur townsfolk as suffering 'une maladie' of hysterical origins is not false, but none the less it takes the evidence of secondary traits at face value, seeing them as constitutive of identity rather than as psychical reactions to specific conflicts. This is illustrated clearly in a scene from Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, when Natasha Rostov puts her life at risk after her failed elopement: whereas the Rostov parents leave no medical stone unturned in a bid to recover their daughter's health, the possible meanings of Natasha's hysterical act are ignored by both parents and doctors. Only the narrator, who is under no illusions that the daughter's suffering is caused by humiliation - of which her illness is an inevitable side-effect, remains calm amid the comings and goings of the Moscow medical establishment who are oblivious to the imaginative underpinnings of Natasha's crisis.

According to the narrator, Eugénie's psychical impasse is a response to romantic failure, and is indirectly fostered by a world which attributes sentiments of loss to all women; a world where one sex, the feminine, is separated from a life of action:

> En toute situation, les femmes ont plus de causes de douleur que n'en a l'homme, et souffrent plus que lui. L'homme a sa force, et l'exercice de sa puissance: il agit, il va, il s'occupe, il pense, il embrasse l'avenir et y trouve des consolations. Ainsi faisait Charles. Mais la femme demeure, elle reste face à face avec le chagrin dont rien ne la distrait, elle descend jusqu'au fond de l'abîme qu'il a ouvert, le mesure et souvent le comble de ses voeux et de ses larmes. Ainsi faisait Eugénie. Elle s'initiait à sa destinée. (*EG* p.157)

Suffering, a kind of stillborn sadness, here indicates the passing away of love; a transformation against which the narrator suggests women employ fewer weapons and struggle less, and from the depths of which men, through efforts of worldly exertion, are protected. Eugénie's plumbing of psychical depths, heightened by the imminent departure of her cousin, contrasts with Charles's labours to secure authority and wealth. While the lives of men like Charles are articulated in deed and word, the lives of their feminine counterparts are written in silence: 'Sentir, aimer, souffrir, se dévouer, sera toujours le texte de la vie des femmes' (*EG* p.157). In her embrace of romantic sentiments, Eugénie is elevated to an exemplar of womanhood, less those compensations which soften it: 'Eugénie devait être toute la femme, moins ce qui la console' (*EG* p.157). As a result of the heroine's willingness to experience a loss of love which is synonymous with a loss of meaning, a kind of imaginative death, Eugénie risks falling into depths that are without measure.

In a parallel scene in *Louis Lambert,* the madman who fails to comprehend the loss of his sanity is contrasted with the intellectual who, on observing the madman's collapse, undertakes to analyze it:

> Un fou est un homme qui voit un abîme et y tombe. Le savant l'entend tomber, prend sa toise, mesure la distance, fait un escalier, descend, remonte, et se frotte les mains. (*Pléiade* vol.2, p.265)

The madman's fate, and the intellectual's recording of it, may well relate to Balzac's own caution in regard to creative pursuits characterized as feminine. For if by identifying with feminine experience Balzac is led to an abyss of suffering which is without fathom, what then is the fate of the author who would represent it? Similarly, in the *Physiologie du mariage,* the narrator undertakes to collect his thoughts on conjugality only after a considerable obstacle has been overcome - his own resistance to collecting them. In order to record all he has overheard and witnessed on the subject of conjugality the narrator is obliged to accept the inherent femininity, and hence vulnerability, of his project:

> Il n'est peut-être indifférent à certains anatomistes de la pensée que l'âme est femme. Ainsi, tant que l'auteur s'interdisait de penser au livre qu'il devait faire, le livre se montrait écrit partout. Il en trouvait une page sur le lit d'un malade, une autre sur le canapé d'un boudoir. Les regards des femmes, quand elles tournoyaient emportées par une valse, lui jetaient des pensées; un geste, une parole, fécondaient son cerveau dédaigneux. (*Pléiade* 11, p.910)

The circumspect postures this narrator adopts in his survey of the intimacies which surround him

appear to issue from a personal challenge to represent romantic sentiment in a melodramatic world. Although *La Comédie humaine* valorizes fidelity, paternity, and virtue, pitting them against promiscuity, insurrection, and egoism, the persistence of this contest hints at the diminished status of the code of gallantry. If the soul is indeed feminine, and its natural locus is that of boudoir, sickroom, and ball-room, then the narrator who would observe it must of necessity take up compromising positions. Equally in *Eugénie Grandet* the soul, which is essentially Eugénie, is the object of an analysis which on occasion disappears into gloom; as for instance when, in reaction to Charles's departure, Eugénie 'descend jusqu'au fond de l'abîme qu'il a ouvert, le mesure et souvent le comble de ses voeux et de ses larmes' (*EG* p.157).

The melodramatic climax to which this novel points is assignable as much to Eugénie's independent passions as to those traits of Grandet - notably a stealthy tread and a passion for valuables - that originate in him. In a bedside vigil beside her sleeping cousin, Eugénie is magnetized by a letter whose address cries out from the envelope: "Chère Annette!' Un démon lui criait ces deux mots aux oreilles' (*EG* p.129). As hysteria would have it, an outward slight - in this case Charles's preference for another woman - fuels a desire as irrepressible, with its roots in homosexual identification with the loved one, as it is poignant. Ignoring the formalities which shield triangular relations, Eugénie steps straight into her rival's shoes, the better to stoke her passions: 'à chaque phrase, son coeur se gonfla davantage et l'ardeur piquante qui anima sa vie pendant cette lecture lui rendit encore plus friands les plaisirs du premier amour' (*EG* p.130). The display of Charles's affection for another prompts Eugénie's longing for originary loves and, on a less conscious level, incites in her a desire to become her cousin's own 'dear one'. Together passion and curiosity do odd things; it is as if Eugénie imaginatively elides herself with Annette in her celebration of ardent love. Yet Eugénie's identification is precocious, for it involves a defence against amorous relations from which she, the unrequited, witnesses her exclusion. In this, the heroine's first experience of love, a potentially transgressive intimacy is made safe by Eugénie's gift to Charles of 'des pièces neuves et vierges, de véritables morceaux d'art', and by her agreement to care for his treasure (*EG* p.137). On being initiated into the secrets of Charles's dressing-case, Eugénie discovers two portraits, one of which she spontaneously assumes to be that of his lover Annette. When Charles corrects her homosexual surmise, by pointing to his mother's features in the brushstrokes, Eugénie 'lui jeta son premier regard de femme aimante, un de ces regards où il y a presque autant de coquetterie que de profondeur' (*EG* p.140). Eugénie's family romance is thus fleshed out with images of a more becoming parent. From that moment on Charles's look and voice will be traced through a maternal paradigm. Paying court to her own

romantic fantasy, Eugénie enquires of Charles: 'Vous ressemblez à votre mère. Avait-elle la voix aussi douce que la vôtre?' (*EG* p.140).

The metamorphosis of Eugénie into a woman pregnant with love, is as total as Charles's change into a determined fortune-seeker. While Charles discards his silken gloves and fancy waistcoats for garb made of heavier stuff, Eugénie is transported into a sensuousness that comes close to rapture: 'de jour en jour ses regards, ses paroles ravirent la pauvre fille, qui s'abandonna délicieusement au courant de l'amour' (*EG* p.146). Eugénie's reveries contrast starkly with her erect and much changed cousin, who 'ne soupirait plus, il s'était fait homme' (*EG* p.149). In addition Eugénie's feelings undergo a noticeable shift, in relation to the portrait which nestles in a hidden compartment of the dressing-box. Again, as in the dawn contemplation of her face, Eugénie's actions are expressive of the movement by which fantasy comes to invest the object such that its real value is secondary to its emotive portent. Of the two parental likenesses it is the feminine visage which is the object of Eugénie's special adoration: 'Soir et matin Eugénie ouvrait la toilette et contemplait le portrait de sa tante' (*EG* p.159). Eugénie is preoccupied by wishful yearnings for a maternal figure that exhibits all those attributes her own mother lacks - beauty, power, insight; yearnings which surround her handling the portrait. Like the newly-betrothed Freud, compelled to look yet not to look at his beloved's portrait, Eugénie is transfixed by an image which triggers her own family romance. The moment her reverie is interrupted by Madame Grandet this spell is broken: triangular passion, implicit in Madame Grandet's warnings of Grandet's certain fury, is reasserted. When Madame Grandet exhorts her daughter to consider what she will show her father in lieu of gold coins on her imminent birthday, Eugénie's glazed expression mirrors her father's look as she had encountered it on the landing at midnight: 'Les yeux d'Eugénie devinrent fixes, et ces deux femmes demeurèrent dans un effroi mortel pendant la moitié de la matinée' (*EG* p.160).

In preparation for the third melodramatic act, following those of Charles's arrival and his despatch to the Indies, the narrator warns of no less than 'une terrible action, une tragédie bourgeoise sans poison, ni poignard, ni sang répandu; mais, relativement aux acteurs, plus cruelle que tous les drames accomplis dans l'illustre famille des Atrides' (*EG* p.160). Events escalate until Eugénie, brandishing a knife with the determination of Antigone, distances herself from Grandet as the family's totemic head. Yet even before confronting Grandet, minus her dowry of gold coins, Eugénie has embraced those defences which will, in conformity with her hysterical destiny, both protect and curtail her. Steadfast in her refusal of help beyond the family, Eugénie

prepares to succeed her mother in the role of martyr. However excessively Grandet berates Eugénie for squandering his wealth, he is yet right to feel betrayed, for in flouting his authority Eugénie projects her loyalty beyond the paternal realm. From this daughter's enlightened perspective, if the father behaves in ways that strip him of rank, it is God who supersedes him as figurehead of justice: 'J'ai bien fait, je ne me repens de rien. Dieu me protégera' (*EG* p.161). In the crisis that ensues speeches worthy of Lear and Cordelia are aired; outrages which drive a white-haired father to rail against his once prized daughter. The dramatic die is cast: Grandet is flagrant in his abuse of power, Eugénie shifts from hysterical loyalty to melancholic hostility, while Madame Grandet raises her eyes heavenward in a despair which fastens them there. This conflict is only apparently about the disposal of money; beneath it an enquiry into which parent is culpable for the daughter's acts seethes. Neither parent accepts responsibility for Eugénie: whereas to Madame Grandet her daughter increasingly displays those strengths she most fears in her husband, to Grandet his daughter's manner is unmistakably, and threateningly, feminine. Ultimately it is Grandet alone whom Eugénie pits herself against with a suppressed fury that hints at an identificatory base. In his God-forsaking exasperation Grandet is driven to inveigh in the first person, then in a third-person imperative, before finally - near collapse - to a law beyond himself: 'Eugénie, vous êtes chez moi, chez votre père. Vous devez, pour y rester, vous soumettre à ses ordres. Les prêtres vous ordonnent de m'obéir' (*EG* p.169). The father's tirade is that of a jailor who suddenly realizes there is no lock on the cell door and that, should his charge escape, his own position is void. So heated does this scene become that even the narrator is upset: Eugénie, given twenty-three years in a previous description, slips back to twenty-two in the steaminess of this debate.

Eugénie's banishment within the family home is a peculiar affair; although Grandet turns the key in her door, pocketing the key on exit, Eugénie is able to let herself out within minutes of his departure. Further it is pride rather than humiliation which, inscribing Eugénie's face with nobility, wins the townsfolk's awe. Eugénie has a beauty which appears to thrive on hardship, upon the externalization of conflict. This resilience, founded on paternal opposition, works to displace her earlier betrayal and instead locates it in her father's neglect of his womenfolk. Because Eugénie has, Grandet's reaction suggests, showered Charles with his wealth and reduced him to cuckold, unlimited wrath is the only potency left to him. Relations between father and daughter are none the less organized around a deceit; for all Eugénie's public support of Grandet, the underlying object of her worship is God the father, final witness and arbiter. Yet, over and above any conscious filial alliance a more collusive, perverse link keeps father and daughter intimate, despite

the exile Grandet imposes on the latter. So it is that Grandet sits on a garden bench daily, at an angle and an hour at which he can admire his daughter brushing her hair; while Eugénie, far from a passive partner in this scheme, positions her mirror so as to enjoy the image of her father watching from behind. But the mime ends when a jealous Grandet interrupts his spouse and daughter as they trace out Charles's features in their aunt's portrait, and breaks the dyadic collusion of mother and daughter. Pooh-poohing Eugénie's suggestion that she and her mother were 'just looking' at the portraits, Grandet ejaculates: 'Voir, c'est pis que toucher' (*EG* p.183). Although this retort highlights Grandet's own relation to objects, it also sheds light on the libidinal nature of a fascination to which, for as long as the two women are engrossed in it, they remain blind.

In interview with the family's concerned friends, Eugénie assumes the role of daughter, a role she dramatizes by her theatrical awareness of it. By stepping forward to bar neighbours from her family's struggles, Eugénie invokes a proprietorial notion of family, an emphasis which girds her with filial sentiment:

> Messieurs, dit-elle en s'avançant par un mouvement plein de fierté, je vous prie de ne pas vous occuper de cette affair. Mon père est maître chez lui. Tant que j'habiterai sa maison, je dois lui obéir. Sa conduite ne saurait être soumise à l'approbation ni à la désapprobation du monde, il n'en est comptable qu'à Dieu [...]. Blâmer mon père serait attaquer notre propre considération. (*EG* p.177)

Putting her father back into the position of 'maître chez lui', after subordinating his authority to God, Eugénie is here propping up the family after contributing to its fall. Secure in the role of self-denying daughter, Eugénie is freed to experience ecstatic delusions: 'Ne voyait-elle pas la mappemonde, le petit banc, le jardin, le pan de mur, et ne reprenait-elle pas sur ses lèvres le miel qu'y avaient laissé les baisers de l'amour?' (*EG* p.174). In the wake of Charles's departure Eugénie's world stalls, enlivened solely by those objects to which nostalgia lends sentiment; for instance it is her conviction that by enshrining the bench she shared with Charles, that his return is brought forward. In her euphoria Eugénie employs imagination to do the work of memory, such that certain objects become engorged with emotion. The affect with which these objects are filled marks them off from ordinary objects, so that its transfer on to the latter is prevented. These precious objects are revered by the heroine to the degree they keep alive reminiscences, based on wishful and contradictory elements, in the present. By favouring the sentimental over the material, Eugénie's attachment to objects at moments borders on the hallucinatory, a state that prizes particular objects for the intense feelings they stimulate rather than for their actual value.

The real drama of this novel is imaginative; thus Eugénie's imprisonment represents a mental war, waged between father and daughter. However torn Eugénie's loyalty becomes, there is no

question that it is the father against whom she is pitted: it is Grandet whose gaze Eugénie traps in the mirror, and whose wrath she inflames by withholding the dressing-case from him. In rising to challenge the authority of her father Eugénie creates the role of resolute daughter. Although the mother's sickbed sets the stage for this filial conflict, it is only after Madame Grandet's death that father and daughter confront each other directly. In the wake of his wife's death Grandet is forced to reconcile his personal estate with the laws of inheritance, while Eugénie is left to absorb the disappearance of both lover and mother, a situation which leaves only Nanon - the family's faithful Caliban - to figure loving relations for her. Having suspended herself in time so as to deny the significance of its passing, Eugénie's commitment to the life that remains to her is melancholy, being reliant on a past which is a nostalgic fiction. Similarly the heroine's promotion of Grandet's financial interests, expressed in her waiving of her stake in Madame Grandet's estate, signals a step back from the parental breach. More and more Eugénie's shows of loyalty are empty of the awe which Grandet originally inspired in her. Instead a nominal affection, reminiscent of her mother's bruised relations to Grandet, ties Eugénie to an ailing, piteous father.

The moment the dead mother comes to inhabit Eugénie psychically is the moment Eugénie submits to her father's plan to transfer the maternal legacy away from herself: 'Je ne comprends rien à tout ce que vous me dites, répondit Eugénie, donnez-moi l'acte, et montrez-moi la place où je dois signer' (*EG* p.188). The legacy which Eugénie is willing to sign away is a metaphor for the loss of value, or depression, that Eugénie suffers after her mother's death. By identifying with her mother's suffering Eugénie neglects her own positive interests. As psychoanalysis has shown, for the psyche to remain vigorous it must be willing to engage in conflict rather than to shy away from it: it must actively challenge rather than be threatened by the anticipation of loss, by the paradox that what one has of value increases in value in virtue of its possible disappearance. Only when the loss of the object - here Eugénie's mother - is absorbed as a loss inflicted on the ego, rather than as a loss of a part of the ego, as happens in melancholia, can the energies bound up with that object be released. It is thus Eugénie's fidelity to an inherently 'incompatible' object choice, that of a martyred mother, which lays the groundwork for her neurosis. After signing over her inheritance to Grandet, Eugénie's efforts to align herself actively beyond the family are quashed. A devotee of a single interpretive model, that of romantic sentiment, Eugénie's sickness is explained by the narrator in terms of an imaginative withdrawal: 'L'amour lui expliquait l'éternité [...]. Elle se retirait en elle-même, aimant et se croyant aimée. Depuis sept ans, sa passion avait tout envahi.' (*EG* p.194)

The shadow of the father, both before and after his death, casts a pall over the daughter. Unstimulated by what the narrator reckons are the regenerating powers of love, years slip by in which what Eugénie gains in integrity and religious sentiment, she loses in spontaneity and will. Although religion offsets the daughter's losses and provides a solace apart from the caprices of the world, there exists a more complex explanation of Eugénie's 'widowhood'. As in Freud's view of melancholia, in which the loved lost object is withdrawn from the world so as to be accommodated within the psyche, there to cast its shadow further and abidingly, Grandet haunts Eugénie as if from both sides of the grave. Reduced to her father's tutelage, she passively adopts his miserly ways: 'il les avait si visiblement tournées chez elle en habitudes, qu'il lui laissa sans crainte les clefs de la dépense, et l'institua la maîtresse au logis' (*EG* p.189). When Grandet's death intervenes, although it is full of pathos, it is a formality for a daughter who has already absorbed the structuring force of his influence.

Significantly, Eugénie's first communication from Charles in seven years, is his formal condolence over her parents' death - a letter which is pendant to the suicide missive a younger Charles delivers at the novel's opening. Charles's condolence for the Grandet's deaths, is couched in a moral diction which disdains sentiment: 'la mort de nos parents est dans la nature, et nous devons leur succéder' (*EG* p.204). This appeal to an inevitable falling off of things is penned by a man who, to incite himself to piracy, 'reniait sa famille' and changed his name, only to fulfil his patronymic more truly: 'le sang des Grandet ne faillit point à sa destinée' (*EG* p.198). Whereas Eugénie seeks to resolve her parental complex through religion, Charles attempts to dispose of his lineage outright. The exploits of the brazen Carl Sepherd, 'indefatigable, audacieux, avide', contrast with Eugénie's activities which foreground the present as an endless reworking of the past: 'tous les jours elle prenait religieusement pour travailler à une broderie, ouvrage de Pénélope, entrepris seulement pour mettre à son doigt cet or plein de souvenirs' (*EG* p.195). Charles's letter, during the reading of which Eugénie sinks on to the hallowed garden seat, expresses his revised views on romantic love: 'Aujourd'hui mon expérience me dit qu'il faut obéir à toutes les lois sociales et réunir toutes les convenances voulues par le monde en se mariant' (*EG* p.205). At this point the narrator designates two feminine responses in the face of loss, one despising and vengeful, the other demure and resigned, and includes Eugénie in the latter: 'ceci est de l'amour, l'amour vrai, l'amour des anges, l'amour fier qui vit de sa douleur et qui en meurt' (*EG* p.207). A revelation of the heroine's purity signals a slackening of the narrative pace, to indicate her turning away from conflict and slow absorption of anguish. With this letter a stone drops in the well of Eugénie's suffering: 'Ma mère avait raison, dit-elle en pleurant. Souffrir et

mourir' (*EG* p.207). Eugénie's yearning to be loved becomes, with this complaint, a yearning for the absence of stimulus and for the relief of an early denouement.

Following Charles's letter a stubborn note enters Eugenie's dealings with the world. The same morning that this letter arrives she receives the curé, a family friend, to discuss the value of taking the veil - in marriage or in a convent. When the curé starkly contrasts the two options, 'le mariage est une vie, le voile est une mort', Eugénie's preference, expressed 'avec une effrayante vivacité', is for the latter (*EG* p.208). Despite their deaths, the mother's philosophy and the father's economy dominate Eugénie's world-view; certainly Mademoiselle Grandet's choice of husband is no less calculated than the fiscal dealings of her late father. Moreover a hint of perversity can be glimpsed in 'la pauvre héritesse' who, in struggling to resolve the 'two veils' dilemma, creates a third option: 'Monsieur le curé, dit Eugénie avec un noble sang-froid que lui donna la pensée qu'elle allait exprimer, serait-ce pécher que de demeurer en état de virginité dans le mariage?' (*EG* p.211). Eugénie advocates chastity within marriage as a spiritual enclave within which a love, cultivated in imaginative melancholy, may be fostered; a choice which the Saumur townsfolk interpret on a continuum from frigidity to perversity. A decorum guides Eugénie as, in unwitting mimicry of her father, she presides over her provincial court: 'C'était une reine, et la plus habilement adulée de toutes les reines' (*EG* p.195). The house in Saumur stands for Eugénie's psychic and physical inheritance upon her parents' deaths; within it, memories of maternal solicitude and paternal instruction guard Eugénie from both sudden joys and radical despair. This psychical arrangement, fashioned by Eugénie to sustain rather than to promote her existence, shows few signs of being a means to reproduce pleasure. By choosing a husband who is overshadowed by Grandet's persisting influence, Eugénie denies the initial loss on which all symbolic activity, fostered by the pursuit of substitutive pleasures, is founded. Instead her interests remain locked in unconscious loyalty to dead loves, on a defensive alert which ties it up against further use.

Within the narrative, years pass with the nonchalance of an afternoon; marriage to an admirer of ten-years' standing is undertaken on the condition that it is non-consummated, and a veil no less opaque than that of the convent screens the heroine's every action. The heroine's withdrawal protects her doubly - from public shame as from personal humiliation. In paying off Charles's debtors Eugénie attempts to sever ties of affection to past loves and to transform an unrequited love into an unrequitable one. Henceforth convention becomes depression's handmaiden, and Eugénie joins a social wheel that controls pleasure to the point of suppressing

it. In failing to reproduce, and in assuming her mother's yellowed complexion and prosaic dress, Eugénie exemplifies those filigree links forecast by a family complex. The passing of a further seven years merely adds to Eugénie's solemn majesty - 'par raillerie, on appelle *mademoiselle*'. The inclusion of local gossip at this point draws attention to a woman who, originally the archetypal feminine, ends up a stereotype of female sterility:

> Pauvre petite femme? Guérira-t-elle bientôt? Qu'a-t-elle donc, une gastrite, un cancer? Pourquoi ne voit-elle pas des médecins? Elle devient jaune depuis quelques temps; elle devrait aller consulter les célébrités de Paris. Comment peut-elle ne pas désirer un enfant? (*EG* p.231)

As in every neurotic case, the hysteric is not the only one to suffer. Eugénie's husband also suffers through his marriage to a girl whose father is dead to her, to a woman who refuses the libidinal element of conscious identifications, and so fails to let her contemporary spouse deeply matter to her. Knowing who she has lost, in terms of lover, mother, and father but not what she has lost, in terms of identificatory models through which psychical progress is vouchsafed, Eugénie's life comes to a stand still: as does the narrative which represents it.

It would appear that Eugénie's psychical mainstay is neither an attachment to her mother nor an attachment to her father as such, but rather those projective sympathies that entwine her fate imaginatively with theirs, expressed in an uneasy alliance which shares hysterical and perverse sympathies. By imaginatively identifying with what is most repressed in herself yet most explicit in her father, Eugénie maintains a link with perverse pleasures which ameliorates the depressive potential of their denial. When the impact of betrayal and death collapses this defence, Eugénie is forced to choose between integrating these suppressed perverse elements, or effecting a dissociation, a neurotic cut, to prevent incompatible elements from slipping into consciousness. If Grandet, as the obsessive, persists in his own satisfactions regardless of their consequences, Eugénie, as the hysteric, is bent on the effacement of all such investments: 'Voici, dit-elle en ouvrant la bourse, les économies d'une pauvre fille qui n'a besoin de rien' (*EG* p.138). Luce Irigaray describes the complementarity of this neurotic mechanism in *Speculum*: 'Between the 'obsessive' on this side, who wants, and demands, and repeats, and turns around in his original desire, which he claims to master in order, finally, to establish his omnipotence, and the 'hysteric' on the other side who drifts aimlessly, wanting nothing, no longer knowing her own mind or desire, acting 'as if' or 'as you like it', her body the only reminder of what has been'.[6]

The pathos surrounding Eugénie's final days, as vague in their narrative import as the day-by-day description of her early romance is intricate, takes the Grandet home back to the zero

economy in which the novel opens. The death of Eugénie's parents appears to transform a hysterical family romance into a melancholic equivalent. This shift confirms Freud's maxim in *Totem and Taboo*, in which he claims that the dead father's influence is more pervasive than the influence exercised by the living father (*SE* 13, pp.145-46). Having repressed the central tenets of the family romance - chance and anticipatory hopes, Eugénie's role in a family of which she is the sole survivor, is confined to upholding those very axioms she had once, in flagrant moments, vehemently repudiated - loyalty, propriety, inhibition. Once hysteria, a brief tumult of eroticism, has died away and its embers left to cool, little is left to indicate Eugénie's hazardous path to femininity, save her loyal attachment to the servant Nanon and a cluster of stubborn habits. Although on its surface Eugénie's life of virtuous abstention consistently defers to the welfare of others, underneath it a vault no less secret than Grandet's office - in which perpetual unrest is declared - remains active. While on a fantasy level *Eugénie Grandet* begins with Eugénie as a princess and ends with her as a queen, on the level of reality she changes from a girlish woman into what Balzac will characterize, in a later story, as 'la femme de trente ans'. In this gradual shift what was first experienced as a libidinal rush is organized into defences which are provoked by the merest sign of libidinal spontaneity. Accordingly Eugénie's passage from youth to middle age is determined less by passing years than by the effects of repressing forces. Nevertheless the role of hysterical heroine, a caricature of a work of art, Eugénie remains the essential feature of Balzac's successful work of art - the novel *Eugénie Grandet*.

Balzac's heroine is shaped by forces which, internal and external, determine her character and femininity. Eugénie Grandet is often depicted in solitude - at her mirror, reading a letter, caught in reverie - yet she is never truly alone; the narrator stays at her side to supply her thoughts and interpret her actions. In the sure hands of a third-person narrator this novel never falters; even when Eugénie contemplates a romantic void, this narrator is careful to stand to one side of it and to maintain links with sense. It would appear that Eugénie and Charles play out opposing sides of the same complex: whereas Eugénie avoids hysterical conflict through turning away from it, Charles overcomes this potential through a conscious denial of a loss that he transcends in mercenary gain. In this narrative the real drama, which takes place in the dialogue between central characters, is presented as a dynamic from which the narrator maintains a formal distance. This narrator is never implicated, refusing to take sides between the hysteric and the obsessive. Although Balzac's heroine is attributed the kind of feminine beauty that is admired by discerning artists, the narrator's keenest attention is given over to Eugénie's behavioural and imaginative responses to the condition of her femininity. Balzac is quick to define passive features of the

human condition, many of which form abiding character traits, as feminine. Although this is illuminating on the level of description, it fails to enlighten on the level of understanding: Balzac's ability to penetrate, in a convincingly analytic way, the imaginative leaps of thoughts which characterize the ways and by ways of the human mind, does not extend to an analysis of such leaps. Balzac is an anatomist of character rather than an anatomist of thought; he works backward from traits or types, rather than tracing the development of certain impulses into such traits in a forward-seeking and speculative way.

In *Eugénie Grandet* the narrator appears knowing of what is going to happen; he may get excited, and often does in exuberant almost drunken ways, but never so much that he lets go the reins for anything more serious than a passing fancy or entertaining digression. There are, however, isolated moments when the narrator goes over to the other side of the living-room window or bedroom mirror, takes up a position in a character's mind and is thus free to enjoy Grandet's lascivious interest in handling gold pieces and Eugénie's fantasies of erotic transformation. But he is never there for long; the momentum of even the slowest sections of the narrative ensures that the most tantalizing incident fails to divert the narrator from his overall task. Because this author is finally more taken up with an analysis of character than with an analysis of the psyche, an enigmatic core of all Balzac's characters remains untouched; this is apparent with Grandet and Charles but even more with Eugénie and Madame Grandet (the latter being a negative projection of her daughter's fate, and for this reason unconvincing as a character in her own right). Eugénie is only a hysteric for as long as her parents are alive and her betrothal intact; when circumstances change, so do her responses to them - broadly from hysteria to depression. In *Totem and Taboo* (1913-14) Freud characterizes the hysteric as a caricature of a work of art, and elsewhere refers to hysteria as a reactive response to creative forces within; thus the hysteric is an artist who has no control over her medium (*SE* 13 p.73-74). This medium is nothing else than psychical impulses which, subject to the refinements of intention and form, can be directed to cultural aims that are independent of original satisfactions. As an author, Balzac is in no danger of being swayed by hysterically caricatured aims, as long as he can describe what goes on in a hysterical response to the world. As long as he can comprehend and communicate what hysterical - and for that matter obsessive - characters cannot afford to understand for themselves, the author, and more specifically the authorial position, is safe. This safeguard is never however invulnerable; as can be seen in the next chapter, in which I shall examine the creative compromises and distortions which Charlotte Brontë effects in the composition of *Villette*.

NOTES

1. Henry James, 'Honoré de Balzac', *The Art of Criticism* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1986), p.85.

2. George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, Prelude, ed. by W. J. Harvey (London: Penguin, 1980), p.2.

3. *Eugénie Grandet*, ed. by Samuel S. de Sacy, (Paris: Gallimard, Collection Folio, 1979). p.167. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text as *EG*.

4. 'Dissertation sur l'homme', in Martin Kanes, *Balzac's Comedy of Words*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1987), p.270.

5. Henry James, 'The Lesson of Balzac', in *The Question of our Speech/The Lesson of Balzac: Two Lectures* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1905), p.106.

6. Luce Irigaray ~~touches on this axis in her book *Speculum*: 'The obsessive wants, demands, repeats, turning round in his original desire which he claims to master to secure omnipotence; the hysteric drifts aimlessly, wanting nothing, no longer knowing her mind or desire, acting 'as if' or~~ 'as you like''. *Speculum*, translated by Gillian C. Gill, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), pp.60-61.

CHAPTER THREE

'My nerves disdained hysteria':

Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*

> You warn me to beware of melodrama, and you exhort me to adhere to the real. [....] Imagination is a strong, restless faculty, which claims to be heard and exercised: are we to be quite deaf to her cry, and insensate to her struggles? When she shows us bright pictures, are we never to look at them, and try to reproduce them? And when she is eloquent, and speaks rapidly and urgently in our ear, are we not to write to her dictation? 1

There is something strange at the heart of *Villette*; and it remains obscure even when a neurotic myth is laid bare, triangular order is reinstated, and the supernatural is consigned to the dressing-up box. This is the seed of paranoia, coined the 'romance of alienation' by Freud, which lurks within what the narrator Lucy Snowe chooses to tell and not to tell of her own story.[2] Although this seed inflects the text it does not by any means determine it, for in Lucy Snowe an education in restraint guides and monitors her most impulsive acts; instead, imaginary asides and metaphoric flights rent the fabric of narrative realism. Despite the hazards of external circumstance to which the heroine is subject, the Ariadne thread which pushes *Villette* on follows an interior path. Charlotte Brontë's final novel is a tale of quiet insurrection, where shifts of mood are presaged by sudden swings of weather, and where aspects of Lucy's psyche are best understood by their projection on to surrounding characters. As the narrator, Lucy Snowe's aim is profoundly simple yet infinitely complex: it is to get others to know and to represent things for her so that she can the better experience them. In an early letter, Brontë refers to the minds of others as 'sealed volumes'; in each one, she suggests to her correspondent, there is a 'hidden language, whose turnings, windings, inconsistencies, and obscurities, so frequently baffle the researches of the honest observer of human nature' (*Brontes* vol.1, p.121). A sense of the linguistic recesses and imaginative caverns of the mind haunts *Villette*; after the emotive extremes of *Jane Eyre* and the conscientious realism of *Shirley*, Brontë appears ready to venture all. Yet a delusional aspect colours this aim; in characterizing her motivation the narrator ingenuously declares: 'I always, through my whole life, liked to penetrate to the real truth; I liked seeking the goddess in her temple, and handling the veil, and daring the dread glance'.[3] Such ruthlessness is brazen; for to puncture the 'real truth' is not necessarily to understand it, as the unravelling of

Lucy's tale itself bears out. Instead, pursued regardless of the conditions of sense, a kind of bafflement, a masking of the text, is its result.

It seems to serve Brontë's purpose to maintain narrator and reader on uneven footings in *Villette*. To read this narrative is to be subject to the charms and blind alleys of a story which doubles up on itself: the narrator indulges in the withholding of important narrative fragments to the point of lying, distortions are flaunted as descriptions, and realities turn out to be mere 'figments'. In contrast to those realist narratives which, in Bronte's opinion, produce meanings 'more real than true,' *Villette* creates a psychological landscape which is affectively and naturalistically heightened. The plot proceeds in the main unconsciously, winding and twisting so as not to come too soon upon 'the goddess in her temple'. Within this atmosphere of suspense, supernatural elements appear in theatrical dress; not only in the recurring swoop of the Nun but in phrases snatched through half-opened doors, reflections glimpsed in window panes, keys quickly pocketed - all attest to unsounded depths. Intriguing, disturbing, frustrating, Lucy Snowe's story compels interpretation; an involution on the level of plot and character requires additional efforts of sense-making. The paradox is simple: although *Villette* is pre-eminently a project of memory, it is riven by an underlying urge to forget.

In keeping with the most successful phase of neurosis, in which an invincible defence ensures that hysteria goes unnoticed, the opening pages of *Villette* are meticulous and calm. Only later, when the plot animates reminiscences which evade the organization of secondary defence, do hysterical elements in the text - residues from an overwhelming original experience against which psychical defences failed - become apparent. At first, during the opening sections at Bretton and then at Miss Marchmont's, there are no outward signs of unrest: the narrator's perceptions are observant, chronological, and clear. Not until the long vacation scenes does the narrator's commitment to psychological realism stretch to the point of breaking. During this period of breakdown the hysterical mechanism, with its conjoining of psychical rebellion and somatic paralysis, takes on a structuring force in the story. When Dr John tries to draw from Lucy the perturbation which would explain her further sighting of the apocryphal Nun, an experience he presumes is delusional, Lucy swiftly claims responsibility for it to herself. Indeed she stipulates the cause of her troubles is: 'Me - Dr John - me; and a great abstraction on whose wide shoulders I like to lay the mountains of blame they were sculptured to bear: me and Fate.' (*V* p.259). This 'great abstraction' is a euphemism for a matter of great intimacy: Lucy's imaginative apprehension of being passed over in love, of being alienated by love unreturned.

Brontë reacted acutely to Harriet Martineau's criticisms of *Villette* which touched on the sentimental problem at the heart of the novel; foremost the suggestion that Brontë had misrepresented the erotic relations in the novel in the wake of a mortifying romance with a professor in Brussels. In a review which appeared in the *Daily News* in 1853, Martineau noted how:

> all the female characters, in all their thoughts and lives, are full of one thing, or are regarded by the reader in the light of that one thought - love. It begins with the child of six years old, at the opening - a charming picture - and it closes with it at the last page; and so dominant is this idea - so incessant is the writer's tendency to describe the need of being loved - that the heroine, who tells her own story, leaves the reader at last under the uncomfortable impression of her having either entertained a double love, or allowed one to supersede another without notification of the transition. (*Brontes* vol.4, p.43)

Martineau's rider is that the novel's heroine loves not one but two men with a simultaneity that is, at least for this feminist critic, not just morally discreditable but emotionally incredible. A comparison with Balzac's rampant plotting and scurrilous parade of manners is also included in Martineau's review. Putting a stop to any association of *Villette* with the controversy surrounding 'French novels', Brontë was trenchant in her claim not to have read Balzac: even though two years earlier she had written to thank G. H. Lewes for the loan of *Modeste Mignon* and *Illusions Perdues*, in a letter that compliments Balzac for his 'subtle perception of the most obscure workings of the human mind' (*Brontes* vol.3, p.172).[4] Something compelled Brontë to dissimulate at this point: most likely the impulse to distance herself from the imputation that she had, in *Villette*, represented a transgressive love.

This surmise is confirmed by a confidence Brontë made to a friend on her return to Yorkshire, which is that in accepting her professor's invitation to return to his and his wife's school, after an initial year with her sister Emily, she had responded to a compelling urge. On this second return from Europe, Brontë admits: 'I returned to Brussels after Aunt's death against my conscience - prompted by what then seemed an irresistible impulse' (*Brontës* vol. 2, p.115). In accepting a position alongside this revered professor it appears that Brontë triggered a confusing because combined satisfaction of libidinal and ambitious wishes. To return, in fiction, to memories embedded in such an experience is not merely to reproduce these memories inside a narrative frame, it is to enliven them retrospectively, fictively, in line with early traumatic memories. As Freud suggests in a letter to Fliess in 1896, memories of this kind *'operate in a deferred fashion as though they were fresh experiences; but they do so unconsciously'*; that is by way of tapping memory-images at their source (*SE* 3, p167n.). In part, the hysterical tension which pervades

Villette can be traced to the author's persistent disregard of warnings against pleasures that the ego considers wrong. The ambivalence which surrounds the memories and fantasies bound up with these pleasures finds expression in the divisive attitudes of the narrator. Filtered into narrative it helps to explain the appearance of a boatman called 'Charon' in the harbour mist, and the bawdy laughter of the stewardess aboard the vessel on which Lucy Snowe leaves England. The transposition of libidinally-charged fantasies into the narrative field is thus undercut by a censorious impulse which, despite doing its utmost to eradicate these fantasies, manages only to distort them further. The strangeness of *Villette* is then an effect of transposing a hysterical scenario into narrative prose; a shift which liberates affects and ideas, divided through repression, into character and plot. In this way hysterical relations, which maintain the hysteric in an imaginative fantasy of 'I' and 'you', find their way into the narrative workings of *Villette*: the addressee is no professor in Belgium but a special and unassignable other that bears no resemblance to any contemporary. Seemingly, in coming within a whisker of 'the goddess in her chamber', Brontë's narrator is released from the constraints of reality and instead freed to create a pleasing narrative.

The composition of *Villette* combines creative and therapeutic aims: through it the author communicates a hysterical scenario, within a narrative framework, to the end of releasing those elements which originally exacted a hysterical response. Brontë's creative motivation in the middle of the nineteenth century thus anticipates the practice of psychotherapy, as undertaken by Freud and Breuer and others, at the end of it. Given the trance-like state Brontë entered when she wrote works of literature this retroactivity is apt; further *Villette* touches on areas of psychical awareness which quiver with erotic feelings. In 'On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomenon: A Lecture' (1893), Freud outlines a procedure already mooted in Brontë's imaginative return to impressions which demand representation for their stimulation to cease. According to Freud's paper, the desire to represent ideas in language has its origins in the impulse to enact something once more, in the hope of effecting its reconciliation in the present. This reproductive urge is, in Freud's view, a fundamental one:

> It falls in with one of the dearest human wishes - the wish to be able to do something over again. Someone has experienced a psychical trauma without reacting to it sufficiently. We get him to experience it a second time, but under hypnosis; and we now compel him to complete his reaction to it. He can then get rid of the idea's affect, which was so to say 'strangulated', and when this is done the operation of the idea is brought to an end. Thus we cure - not hysteria but some of its individual symptoms - by causing an unaccomplished reaction to be completed. (*SE* 3, p.39)

The wish 'to be able to do something over again' is the reverse of the coin on which the

compulsion to repeat is impressed. The desire to experience painful events again is explained by intense impulses, suppressed from consciousness, seeking their way back into consciousness in order to put an end to a persistence of affect: 'a healthy psychical mechanism has other methods of dealing with the affect of a psychical trauma even if motor reaction and reaction by words is denied to it - namely by working it over associatively and by producing contrastive ideas' (*SE* 3, p.37). It is then in the enabling effects of imagination, as it promotes the conjoining of affect, idea, and memory, that Brontë's literary project lies. Only through imagination, the faculty the narrator calls 'that kinder power', may images which are unacceptable to the ego be transformed into narrative sequences reproducible in language. But a complication remains, for in the same paper Freud cautions that the psychotherapeutic procedure, similar to the workings of creativity itself, concentrates its curative power on hysterical symptoms and rarely extends its influence to the neurotic structure. This surmise explains the mixed success of *Villette*, in that despite the resolution of feelings and ideas arising from the transposition of reminiscence into narrative, ultimately it fails as a therapeutic endeavour, perhaps because of the limited ways creativity affects the hysterical structure underlying it.

The conflict which motivates and on occasion paralyzes the plot in *Villette* is captured in a recurring question the narrator asks herself: 'Will you go forward or backward?' From Lucy Snowe's perspective, to venture forward means to progress psychically: it is to test inner percepts against stimuli received by the senses, and thus to revise judgements in relation to which the psyche perceives reality. In contrast to go backward involves a double risk: either an imaginative regression to a point where images are evoked hallucinatorily or, in a defence against it, fixation in a static present. This last condition, inertia, characterizes the narrator's position at the novel's opening. Were it not for the agitation caused by a cot appearing in her guest-room at Bretton, Lucy Snowe would - as she herself professes - have remained in a state of contented passivity. Thus the narrator explains how she 'liked peace so well, and sought stimulus so little, than when the latter came [she] almost felt it a disturbance'. Left to herself Lucy Snowe hugs the shadows; only a need to understand the most intimate of conditions, her own, spurs her to enquiry. Thus she is driven to ask of the newcomer's belongings: 'Of what are these things the signs and tokens?' (*V* p.62). Having repressed traces of satisfaction in herself, the heroine seeks to awaken them from unconsciousness through another, in this instance through little Polly, in whom links to unconscious satisfaction remain open. Lucy Snowe's sudden interest in the arrival of Polly Home illustrates Freud's thesis in the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, where he points out that in regard to the desire to know it is 'not theoretical, but practical interests that set the investigative

activity in movement' (*SE* 7, p.194). Alerted to the scrutiny of her young companion, ~~a lady in miniature~~, Lucy's attention follows minutely the toilet, manners, and emotions of this lady in miniature. Tireless in its note-taking, Lucy's research aims at discovering what it is about Polly Home that attracts others, including Lucy herself, to her. This positive attraction contrasts with the neutrality which characterizes Lucy's relations with others, a feature which allows her to watch, without this scrutiny being noted: 'unobserved I could observe', she boasts.[5] Such scrutiny can however rebound: in an extreme of imaginative anguish Lucy later confesses to her saviour: 'It kills me to be forgotten, Monsieur'(*V* p.699). This tension, between the heroine's circumspect observation of others and the related anxiety that she herself might disappear from an interpersonal context, is one which is an uneasy feature of this text.

To suffer extremes of neglect is, in the world of Lucy Snowe, to experience an imaginative death; while on the other hand to receive the comforts of intimacy is to gain the highest of blessings. The mild-mannered Dr John, who the narrator perceives as the provider of such comforts, thus takes on - in the privacy of Lucy Snowe's reverie - hallucinatory features:

> I kept a place for him too, a place of which I never took the measure, either by rule or compass: I think it was like the tent of Peri-Banou. All my life I carried it folded in the hollow of my mind - yet, released from that hold and constriction, I know not but its innate capacity for expanse might have manifested it into a tabernacle for a host. (p.)

On the other side of Lucy's strident independence lies a capacity for servitude so great that it must be suppressed, it being offensive to an ego which keeps dependent ties at a minimum to guard against loss. The longing which fuels this servitude marks the strength with which an originary satisfying object is kept out of consciousness. Its proportions are precisely the reverse of Eugénie Grandet's abyss of sadness: although neither Brontë's tent of Peri-Banou nor Balzac's 'l'abîme sans fond' bear an external measure, the one tends to ecstatic pleasure and the other tends to constant suffering. Behind Lucy Snowe's equivocations over whether to pursue a forward or backward movement is a powerful urge toward the cessation of all movement, toward the avoidance of all conflict. Like Gwendolen Harleth's journey to Leubronn at the beginning of *Daniel Deronda*, Lucy's voyage to Brussels is also a flight, and thus is undertaken as much in the spirit of despair as of adventure. Through the suppression of her own history in *Villette*, Lucy Snowe appears to sidestep the family romance as it holds sway over Polly Home and the Brettons; yet it is the pressure of this disaffiliation which becomes, in Lucy's moments of crisis, too great to bear. Amid her suffering during the long vacation, Lucy concedes: 'A sorrowful indifference to existence often pressed on me - a despairing resignation to reach betimes the end of all things earthly' (*V* p.228). It is then not so much the impulse to distance herself from forbidden pleasures,

as the urge to be divested of desire itself, which underwrites Lucy Snowe's worst struggles. And it is this struggle which, fleshed out in narrative, alternatively promotes and confounds the fortunes of the heroine - and the success of the novel besides. This deep wish, 'to reach betimes the end of all things earthly' thus inhabits *Villette*, not just thematically in the fate of the heroine, but stylistically in those passages where the creative impulse threatens to exhaust itself. In this way, the desire for a state in which the boundaries of the ego and its defensive structures might miraculously dissolve, from time to time punctuates *Villette*.

In this novel the narrator is in search of a conscious identity which, assumed in the performance of discrete acts, may be credited by herself and others. Although Lucy's capacity for servitude to a male host is marked, her keener imaginative thralldom extends to those women with whom she enjoys intimate contact. Lucy is fascinated by women alongside whom the position of male complement lies fallow: Mrs Bretton, Miss Marchmont, Vashti, and Madame Beck - all live without spouses. From these four characters Lucy gleans a composite notion of 'woman'; a depiction of which, entitled 'La Vie d'une Femme', she examines in the Villette art gallery in response to the coaxing of Monsieur Paul. The qualities of the four women Lucy becomes acquainted with are conveyed distinctively by the narrator: Mrs Bretton exudes matronly sufficiency and doting maternal affection, Miss Marchmont lives out the consequences of a melancholic nostalgia for dead love, Vashti embodies a passion which defies bodily limits and aesthetic commentary, and Madame Beck displays a phallic determination freed of feminine scruples. With three of these women Lucy's identification is tacitly hysterical: in that although she unconsciously identifies with their external traits, being distrustful of their value as mentors, she yet removes herself to a safe distance from their influence.[6] This dual mechanism is void when it comes to the actress Vashti, whose passionate performance upsets any capacity for organized defence. Flooded by an experience which challenges the categories of culture - it is uncertain whether Vashti's performance is theatre, dance, or fugue, Lucy is startled by a physical presentation of grief:

> I have said that she doesn't *resent* her grief. No; the weakness of that word would make it a lie. To her, what hurts becomes immediately embodied: she looks on it as a thing that can be attacked, worried down, torn in shreds. Scarcely a substance herself, she grapples to conflict with abstractions. (*V* p.340)

Unlike Lucy's scrupulous observations of Mrs Bretton, Miss Marchmont, and Madame Beck, Vashti overwhelms the narrator's powers of perception. The solicitude of Madame Beck is swept aside to reveal the 'brawn' and 'flesh' of Vashti who is, supposedly, infused with impulses stronger than any restraints of her ego. Unlike Lucy's bourgeois models, Vashti is capable of grappling

with and destroying the forces which oppose her: rather than adapting to contrary impulses through secondary defence, the performer dramatizes her conflicts outright. Yet this actress's strangeness is human, not otherworldly: 'it was a marvellous sight: a mighty revelation. It was a spectacle low, horrible, immoral' (*V* p.339). In Vashti's dance, Lucy is fascinated by an expression of creative violence which is capable of reducing grief to 'a thing that can be attacked'. Lucy's description of this episode is as ambiguous and allusive as the earlier references in the narrative which relate to her own childhood. The experience of this performance signals a way forward for the heroine; one which respects, rather than repudiates, the realm of fantasy. It hints that it is only what is not represented within the psyche which appears, projectively, as if it is occurring from without - a thesis which will, in the supernatural elements of the narrative, be multiply confirmed.[7]

What most impresses Lucy in the performance of a dancer whose act is broken off by shouts of 'Fire!' throughout the theatre auditorium, is the ease with which Vashti inhabits her body. This is particularly apparent to a narrator who frequently draws attention to her own discomfort, as much in emotional as in physical senses. In expressing her unease with the physical and mental spaces available to her, Lucy indirectly focuses on those parts of herself for which she can find no repose. Lucy's living conditions thus undergo a distortion equal to the psychical constraints they give rise to: Bretton, where Lucy notes the relations of intimacy about her with feline intelligence, is overly easeful; Miss Marchmont's apartment is cramped and dark; the pensionnat is variously draughty, meagrely lit, and notoriously public; while the school finally opened in Lucy's name possesses proportions and details commensurate with the fulfilment of a cherished wish. This movement, toward a spaciousness in thought and abode, is continuous with the depressions, reversals, and revelations of a narrator who complains, on setting sail for Europe, of her 'homeless, anchorless, unsupported mind'. The concept of home, echoed in Polly Home's surname and in several negative ascriptions of the heroine's homelessness, takes existential shape in Lucy's mind; querulously the narrator asks: 'is there nothing more for me in life - no true home - nothing to be dearer to me than myself, and by its paramount preciousness to draw from me better things than I care to culture for myself only?'(*V* p.450). Lucy's hankering is for a self more encompassing than a sum of its parts, for a life beyond the satisfaction of egoistic aims and, by implication, from the constrictions of defence. This yearning helps to explain those moments where Lucy finds herself a participant in the narrative strategies of others, and in particular those coloured by her fear of being reduced to the status of a pawn in a Catholic plot. In all these ways the heroine conceives of existing structures as alien and exclusive, a conception which is apt to leave her in the role of interloper, of uninvited guest.

So what exactly is it that, transposed into narrative, seeks release in *Villette*? What is it that Lucy Snowe desires and yet dreads contact with? Unsettled by the arrival of an intriguing visitor at the novel's opening, Lucy immediately subordinates herself in her godmother's affections to Polly, the fairy child who succeeds by assuming nothing: thus Polly is described as variously 'silent, diligent, absorbed, womanly' (*V* p.73). In Lucy's eyes, Polly's desire is to gain Graham's love over and above any personal gain: 'To stand by his knee, and monopolize his talk and notice, was the reward she wanted - not a share of the cake' (*V* p.83). Years later, following the transformation of Polly's childish crush for Graham into a womanly love for Dr John, Paulina intones to Lucy: "Lived and loved!' said she, 'is that the summit of earthly happiness, the end of life - to love? [...] If Schiller had said to *be* loved - he might have come nearer the truth. Is that not another thing, Lucy, to be loved?" (*V* p.389). Yet it is to passive desires just like these that Lucy quickens, as if to a temptation that privileges personal happiness over worldly survival. Lucy's envy of Polly, and thence Paulina, is for what she can never have: the luxury of experiencing emotions before subjecting them to analysis; a license Lucy, sharpened by pecuniary and emotional want, can ill afford. Increasingly Paulina is identified with what Lucy, subject to psychological and material constraints, cannot for herself assume - a golden future. And the most prized of all the gifts that this princess boasts is that of memory. Lucy's first impression, on renewing acquaintance with Paulina after a ten-year lapse, is of this enduring quality in her features:

> Her eyes were the eyes of one who can remember; one whose childhood does not fade like a dream, nor whose youth vanish like a sunbeam. She would not take life, loosely and incoherently, in parts, and let one season slip as she entered on another: she would retain and add; often review from the commencement, and so grow in harmony and consistency as she grew in years. (*V* pp.359-60)

It is Polly's good fortune to be subject neither to hysterical divisions, nor to the psychical gaps which are their consequence; for such a woman no incompatibility between emotion and thought, affect and representation can be countenanced. Instead an unbroken communication between psychical agencies and, more specifically, between ego and libidinal wishes, is commended.

The power of memory proves less a treasure than a safeguard for Lucy Snowe: initially employed as a defence, only subsequently is it transformed into an ally, and even then it is an uncertain one. Bracing herself against a foreign household in which intimacy appears closed to her, Lucy claims: 'If life be a war, it seemed my destiny to conduct it single-handed' (*V* p.381). This fear is borne out in the travails of a heroine whose claims on others are limited, and in whom signs of strain are endemic. Lucy's world is one in which surveillance is constant, scarcity mixes with a heedless wealth; and proximity to others is frequently hostile. These constraints find an echo in

Lucy's inclination, as narrator, to tell or not to tell crucial aspects of the plot. What Lucy chooses to declare of her own childhood is so steeped in Homeric hyperbole that its communicative function is effaced; instead, imagery of shipwreck and cosmic savagery abounds:

> To this hour, when I have the nightmare, it repeats the rush and saltiness of briny waves in my throat, and their icy pressure on my lungs. [...] a heavy tempest lay on us; all hope that we should be saved was taken away. In fine, the ship was lost, the crew perished. (*V* p.94)

Something too unbearable to grasp washes these early memories back to the images in which they began, before, caught up in narrative, urging them forward again. It is this wave-like motion which pushes the story on. In these conditions the narrator's unspoken problem is not whether to relate - to love, or to reject - to hate, her intimates, but whether to align herself with others at all, in view of the risks attached to intimacy. An ebb and flow of the heroine's attraction to and withdrawal from people and things is striking in this narrative. Indeed what scanty memories of childhood Lucy does depict are suggestive of a survivor who would forego his own rescue if it meant saving another: objects emptied of emotional value are locked away, friendships are assessed according to their potential dangers, while the future, an altogether unreliable prospect, remains shrouded.[9]

Despite the heroine's orphan status Lucy Snowe does not lack conscience: on the contrary, her adolescent memories of the Brettons indicate how strongly it has been inculcated. In anticipation of her teaching career, Lucy is swift to explain the concrete differences between Graham Bretton and a vexed Polly. Lucy to Polly: 'he is a boy and you are a girl; he is sixteen and you are only six; his nature is strong and gay, and yours is otherwise' (*V* p.91). The self-evidence of such anatomical and psychological differences is disingenuous: certainly later in the narrative nothing is less clear than why Graham's path should necessarily be so 'halcyon'. Equally cursory is Lucy's summary of Miss Marchmont, the unamiable yet beneficent invalid who provides Lucy's first employment: 'Miss Marchmont was a woman of fortune, and lived in a handsome residence; but she was a rheumatic cripple, impotent, foot and hand, and had been so for twenty years' (*V* p.95). When Lucy calls on Madame Beck's school on a rain-lashed night, her trunk mislaid at the port, she demands an immediate position from the headmistress, as if any delay were inconceivable. This meeting is decisive in terms of the heroine's destiny, because in Madame Beck Lucy meets a maternal representation of conscience. The superficiality of the heroine's earlier character sketches contrasts with the scrutiny with which Lucy analyses her ultimate rival, Madame Beck: 'Wise, firm, faithless; secret, crafty, passionless; watchful and inscrutable; acute and insensate - withal perfectly decorous - what more could be desired?' (*V* p.137). Surely this portrayal more precisely describes an aspect of the psyche, the conscience, than the contours of personality?

From their first meeting Madame Beck watches, supervises, and restrains Lucy Snowe in the most powerful way - through indirection. In Madame Beck Lucy's conscience is writ bold. Her employer's intriguingly androgynous and antithetic vigour is quickly perceived by Lucy; thus early on in their acquaintance Lucy notes that Madame Beck:

> did not wear a woman's aspect, but rather a man's. Power of a particular kind strongly limned itself in all her traits, and that power was not *my* kind of power [...] It seemed as if a challenge of strength between opposing gifts was given' (*V* p.141).

It is in growing liaison with Madame Beck that Lucy comes to recognize those parts of herself which previously were unfigured, without psychical outline: in her company Lucy both dares and risks more in a collusion so intimate that it is barely visible to others.

Relations between Lucy Snowe and Madame Beck emerge in the form of a psychical cat-and-mouse. No matter how fervent Lucy's conviction that the headmistress's searches of her belongings are fruitless, still she is flattered by the thought that they are worth combing. Although Madame Beck's scrutiny is universal, in that she searches everyone, Lucy is encouraged by her particular interest to a woman who imperceptibly becomes her mentor. It would appear that the heroine's attachment to Madame Beck is cast from something older than love: from an identificatory bond which, originating during the phase of narcissism, is inherently aggressive. This identification, as it is adopted by Lucy, may be articulated in the mental strategy: 'I'll become so like you that you cannot get at me without getting at yourself'. Lucy's narcissistic yet fragile 'me' makes various appearances before gaining the attention of Madame Beck. Ever quick to contrast herself with others, Lucy notes the transformation of a schoolfriend from a simple girl into:

> a beautiful and kind-looking woman [...] Widowhood and maternity had changed her thus, and I have since seen them change others even less promising than she. Me she had forgotten' (*V* p.105).

Thus while Lucy's neglected 'me' is challenged by the informed glance of Madame Beck, a younger 'me' is in evidence before the heroine's voyage to Europe. Reluctantly taking leave of the refuge of Miss Marchmont's home, Lucy senses 'a strong vague persuasion, that it was better to go forward than backward, and that I *could* go forward' (*V* p.107). It comes then as scarcely a surprise when Madame Beck, as agent of the heroine's fortune, proposes to Lucy the role of teacher over that of governess, with the question: "Will you,' said she, 'go backward or forward?' indicating with her hand, first, the small door of communication with the dwelling-house, and then the great double portals of the classes or schoolrooms' (*V* p.141). Lucy's response to this challenge is to pass through 'the great double portals', where she quickly adopts Madame Beck's tactics to overcome the rabble that awaits her. Picking out a notorious and unpopular rioter, the narrator recalls that, 'in an instant, and with sharpness, I had turned on her. In another instant she

occupied the closet, the door was shut, and the key in my pocket' (*V* p.144). Like the child who masters his own punishment by inflicting it on another, Lucy takes up Madame Beck's game with an eagerness that displaces the hysterical fixity of cat-and-mouse.

During these shifts of power a sexual impetus, in discrete dress, makes itself present. In a scene which recalls *Jane Eyre*, Lucy Snowe's romantic interests are sparked by female laughter: 'Yes, I heard a giddy treble laugh in the [...] little cabinet, close by the door of which I stood - that door half-closed; a man's deep voice in a soft, deep, pleading tone, uttered some words' (*V* p.168). An atmosphere of amorous intrigue, from which Lucy stands proudly aloof, yet attracts her as a member of a school where 'large sexual indulgence (so to speak) was permitted by way of counterpoise to jealous spiritual restraint' (*V* p.195). Although this indulgence hardly touches Lucy Snowe, the accompanying restraint proves both a comfort and a brace to a heroine whose outward desire for independencebelies a contrary wish to keep her place under Madame Beck's eye. Paradoxically the intense supervision of the school heightens Lucy's sense of personal risk: proof of innocence is never adequate, an atmosphere of suspicion always remains. Soon after hearing dizzy female laughter in the next room, the heroine stumbles on a mystery of a more ancient kind. Wandering in the garden at dusk, she happens upon 'the portal of a vault, imprisoning deep within that ground, on whose surface grass grew and flowers bloomed, the bones of a girl whom a monkish conclave of the drear middle ages had here buried alive, for some sin against her vow' (*V* p.172). Thus although Lucy herself takes no vow, her anxiety over wrong-doing is pervasive, mounting to fuel the 'monkish' plot which threatens to bring about her own interring.

Lucy's hysterical anxieties are set of by contact with an Oedipalized couple from which she suffers exclusion. It is only after the appearance of Monsieur Paul, whose amorous attentions to Madame Beck are public knowledge, that an emotional triangle - to include Lucy - is formed. Monsieur Paul is given the attributes of a Popish literature master, whose fondness for phrenology and surveillance surpasses that of the headmistress herself. Not until she sees these two together does Lucy realize an attraction for Monsieur Paul, an attraction increased by the favours Madame Beck showers on him. From this moment Lucy takes part in a rivalrous dynamic of love, such that her growing love for Monsieur Paul coincides with an impulse to subjugate Madame Beck's prior claim. Through this Oedipal combat Lucy overcomes the resistance which keeps her own love for Monsieur Paul in a state of inadmissibility. Yet when Lucy finally throws down her gauntlet it is at the feet, not of Monsieur Paul, but of Madame Beck: 'She was *my* rival,

heart and soul, though secretly, under the smoothest bearing, and utterly unknown to all save her and myself' (*V* p.544). On a primitive level Lucy Snowe wants Monsieur Paul so that Madame Beck may be prevented enjoyment of him; and it is the unacceptability of this wish which accounts for Lucy's supposed indifference to her rival's claim. By a process unknown to Lucy, Madame Beck's innermost thoughts become known to her: 'Deep into some of Madame's secrets I had entered - I know not how; by an intuition or an inspiration which came to me - I know not whence' (*V* p.544). This confusion is assignable to the hysterical dilemma of aspiring to what the mother has, the father's love, while denying any aspiration to be what the mother is - which from the hysteric's point of view is a 'nothing'. Thus Herr K., a protagonist in Freud's *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, confirms his romantic intent in Dora with the confidence: 'You know I get nothing out of my wife' (*SE* 7, p. 98). To aspire to the mother's position, while decrying the identification which might fulfil it, is to reduce identification to a mimicry in which the girl takes up the 'clothes' of the mother while rejecting the body which gives them form. In this way the hysteric steals the trappings of the woman while, at the same time, dissociating herself from the feminine drives which make sense of them. When Lucy Snowe finally confronts Madame Beck with the intensity of her feelings for Monsieur Paul, it is as if the narrator literally sees through her rival: 'her habitual disguise, her mask and her domino, were to me a mere network reticulated with holes' (*V* p.544).

There is however an important sense in which the Oedipal triangle in *Villette* masks a struggle which occurs prior to this phase, a struggle characterized by an imaginative fight to the death between the subject and the loved object, usually modelled on the mother. In psychoanalytic theory, individual psychical progress is traced through contact with objects given positive and negative values: positive in the sense of a repeated impulse to bring favoured objects close; negative in the sense of keeping distant those objects perceived as dangerous. In the progress of subjective awareness all objects come to be tinged with positive and negative hues, and the capacity to reconcile these contraries depends on the mother's ability to respond to libidinal cries of the child which are, on occasion, aggressively tinged. Trust is established during this process: the child's wrath causes him or her to move away from the mother (or carer) and it is only the resilience of the mother - her ability to absorb combined displays of desire and aggression - which allows the child to accept these opposing impulses as his or her own. If the mother is unable to perform this function the exigent need persists, despite the child's efforts to communicate it. Although momentary gratification can be achieved through hallucinatory satisfaction the sensation of need that fuels it continues unabated, a situation which impedes the psyche's capacity to manage future conflicts. When however these cries are successful the child learns to

distinguish between a cry against the impulses which agitate it from within, and a call for the object who might relieve them in the outside world. The potential for the confluence of these cries increases as long the infant remains unattended, with libidinal and aggressive desires being imaginatively rekindled whenever the situation threatens to recur. When this distress escalates it risks becoming an attack on the self that experiences it. Such a compound is masochism, in which internal distress is imaginatively conjoined with a desire to avenge the absence of the important object. In the 'Project for a Scientific Psychology' Freud explains that such a mechanism may make matters worse, first by prolonging the subject's experience of being left in the position of object, and secondly by experiencing hysterical helplessness in relation to self and external world (*SE* 1 pp.306-07; pp.317-24). From a psychoanalytic perspective the situations of Polly Home and of Lucy Snowe are contrastive: while Polly's early distress is directed against the abandonment which provokes it, and toward the missing father - and then Graham Bretton - who might ameliorate it, Lucy's distress, as magnified in the long vacation, gathers into an angry but impotent protest against her own abandonment, a reaction which further removes her from intimacy with others.

The price Lucy Snowe pays for safe harbour in Madame Beck's establishment is perpetual vigilance: again and again the heroine's suppression of strong emotions precedes the dramatic turns of plot which occur under cover of darkness. The sensitivity with which Lucy responds to her straitened circumstances has its echo in the distress of young Polly which opens the novel; the narrator Lucy Snowe tells how, in the wake of Mr Home's departure, Polly went and did 'for herself what none other could do - contended with an intolerable feeling; and ere long, in some degree, repressed it' (*V* p.79). Similarly the mature Lucy, reckoning on Dr John's indifference to a show of affection from the demure English mistress, admits:

> This longing, and all of a similar kind, it was necessary to knock on the head; which I did, figuratively, after the manner of Jael to Sisera, driving a nail through their temples. Unlike Sisera, they did not die: they were but transiently stunned, and at intervals would turn on the nail with a rebellious wrench; then did the temples bleed, and the brain thrill to its core. (*V* p.176).

This bloody depiction of feeling in thrall to a vicious taskmaster is exaggerated only in its allegorical guise; Lucy experiences herself as turning on a rack which quashes any sign of desire or revolt. Such vigilance suggests a tension between ego and conscience. As soon as the heroine's surveillance drops, her ego is left to contend with contrasting demands of pleasure and restraint, referee to a contest between competitors of staggered strengths. Meanwhile those impulses which evade such controls bide their time in a realm cut off from Lucy's will. The narrator is not oblivious to these pressures: 'I have ever felt most burdensome that sort of sensibility which bends of its own will, a giant slave under the sway of good sense' (*V* p.71). Responsibility, Duty,

and Common-sense - in upper case throughout the text - are the uprights of Lucy's character: reaction-formations which, together, span the peaks of ambition and the outer reaches of despair. It is the heroine's failure to maintain these ideals which adds to their imperiousness. The upholding of these ideals, imposed not created, entail a subterfuge and parrying which is carried out on behalf of the heroine's ego. The caution with which Lucy views these ideals reflects the distance her ego stands from the function that would commend them - a scornful conscience. This rift helps to explain hysterical conflict by way of the fencing movements which keep ego and conscience distinct, rather than - as Freud first surmised - by way of the skirmishes between ego and id. It is noticeable that whenever a narrative impetus overrides Lucy's commitment to caution, her career in restraint drops right away. About to set sail from London, with no destination beyond a French port in mind, Lucy muses: ''How is this?' said I. 'Methinks I am animated and alert, instead of being depressed and apprehensive?' I could not tell how it was' (*V* p.111). Increasingly, it is those things which Lucy cannot determine for herself, that come to punctuate her psychical destiny more strongly than a predetermined and hence hysterical fate.

Lucy's staunch adherence to Protestantism a.id Villette's prevailing Catholicism works to screen those beliefs she holds independent of creed. Beneath the narrator's noisy opinions on religious and cultural autonomy a more subdued conflict, between tenuous personal hopes and an opposed but linked hysterical dread, can be glimpsed. Paradoxically, the pressure of this conflict serves to recommend Lucy's salvation:

> With what dread force the conviction would grasp me that Fate was my permanent foe, never to be conciliated. I did not, in my heart, arraign the mercy or justice of God for this; I concluded it to be part of his great plan that some must suffer deeply while they live, and I thrilled in the certainty that of this number, I was one. (*V* p.229)

Just as she is reassured by Madame Beck's picking over of her belongings, Lucy welcomes those weals of fate that promise her deliverance. However, even the prospect of heavenly solace cannot lessen Lucy's supreme test of absence, the summer vacation. During these months Lucy is left in the pensionnat with a handicapped child for company: 'the trial God had appointed me was gaining its climax, and must now be turned by my own hands, hot, feeble, trembling as they were' (*V* p.232). Devoid of companionship, the heroine suffers a neurotic depression in which a despair, more archaic than any loss of love, erupts in feverish longing. Akin to the hysterical dissociation of feeling and idea which afflicts Breuer's Anna O., Lucy is driven from her dormitory, after perceiving the empty room as a graveyard. Like Anna O., who envisions snakes on the flesh of her dying father, the 'worst' for Lucy is captured in a dream which persists on waking: 'Methought the well-loved dead, who had loved *me* well in life, met me elsewhere, alienated [...]

quite unendurable was the pitiless and haughty voice in which Death challenged me to engage his unknown terrors' (*V* pp.231-32).

This vision of the heroine fits in with Freud's explanation of the dream process, in which incoming excitation, instead of pushing toward the motor end of the psychic apparatus and thus to a physical release from tension, pushes back to the sensory end of the apparatus to there awaken hallucinatory images. The visual element of unconscious memory traces, which Freud suggests becomes less vivid in secondary thought process, is here superordinate. Likewise during Lucy's vision the past tense is the present tense, loved ones are persecutors, and hypochondriacal fears for the self are personified as Death. In this climax, memory reverts to the perceptual - and inherently deathly - identity which inspired it. Unlike Eugénie Grandet's troubled yet stable psychical organization, Lucy Snowe's defences do break down. During this scene a nightmare, or traumatic dream, overwhelms the ego's capacities to halt memory traces from being reawakened by perceptions. The narrator's conscious anger for her abandonment is mute; instead its inward form, experienced as persecutory fears, hounds her out of the dormitory. What might otherwise provoke anger in the ego is transferred, through repression, to emerge as guilt in the conscience: a transfer which triggers both the narrator's flight from the pensionnat and the narrative's flight from realism. The summer storm in this scene reflects the affective storm that the narrator suffers, to the point of her lapse from consciousness.

But this lapse is temporary, and after it the narrative impulse returns with a rush. Before Lucy Snowe is free to experience passion creatively, it is necessary that she recover from what Dr John calls 'a case of spectral illusion [...] resulting from long-continued mental conflict' (*V* p.). Lucy's imaginative illness, this narrative implies, is the result of desires turned inward such that they register as anguish. Yet Dr John's diagnosis of 'spectral illusion' is euphemistic, given that this doctor is trained solely to observe organic disorders in his patients. From a psychoanalytic perspective, Lucy's fall in the rain after her confession to Père Silas enacts an offering to the father, expressed in the only form available to a resistant ego - an unconscious faint. The kindness and concern of Père Silas stimulates memories which originate in a previous overwhelming of the ego, in which distress and desire were linked momentarily. On the level of narrative, Lucy's faint signals the ego's efforts to achieve what Peter Brooks calls an 'escape *from* plot', in which the pressure of metonymic conflict seeks its release in metaphor - in this case, in a return to the arms of the father.[10] When Dr John, liberal representative of nineteenth-century medicine, is called to Lucy's bedside, because her depressive malady is psychical, it is declared untreatable: 'Medicine

can give nobody good spirits. My art halts at the threshold of Hypochondria: she just looks in and sees a chamber of torture, but can neither say nor do much' (*V* p.257). Doubly estranged, first by the neglect of others in the vacation and then by the medical shrug her moral ailment inspires, Lucy Snowe is forced to resolve her 'spectral illusion' along the same pathways it was originally devised - imaginatively.

Lucy Snowe's hysteria involves brushing against a powerful imaginative strangeness in herself, a strangeness which increasingly takes on a supernatural dress. With the trial of the summer vacation behind her, Lucy's rival Reason stands victorious, while the heroine lies in bed, vanquished (*V* p.237). Recovery from such an experience is lengthy:

> The divorced mates - Spirit and Substance - were hard to re-unite: they greeted each other, not in an embrace, but a racking sort of struggle. The returning sense of sight came upon me, red, as if it swam in blood; suspended hearing rushed back loud, like thunder; consciousness revived in fear: I sat up appalled, wondering into what region, amongst what strange beings I was waking. (*V* p.237)

Lucy's allegiance to Reason, with its power to distinguish between perceptions from without and impulses from within, is in tatters. Imagination turned against itself produces a state verging on hallucination: 'I should have understood what we call a ghost, as well as I did the commonest object' (*V* p.237). Through her 'consciousness revived in fear', Lucy strives to treat the emotional condition which led her to seek Catholic confession. Keen to distance herself from the compulsion which motivated her religious appeal, Lucy is quick to deny its significance. To Dr John she insists that her confession had signified: 'no confidence, no narrative. I have done nothing wrong: my life has not been active enough for any dark deed, either of romance or reality: all I poured out was a dreary desperate complaint' (*V* p.258). Increasingly it is Lucy's fascination with intimacy, that much wished-for but suspect prize, which propels her into narrativity; into plotting meaningful sequences of events out of otherwise obscure perceptions and experiences. Revived by the resurgence of memory which is released by renewed friendship with the Brettons, Lucy none the less keeps a distance between herself and others. Speaking of her reacquaintance with her godmother, she notes:

> the difference between her and me might be figured by that between the stately ship, cruising on a smooth sea with its full complement of crew, a captain gay and brave, and venturous and provident; and the life-boat, which most days of the year lies dry and solitary in an old, dark boat-house, only putting to sea when the billows run high in rough weather, when cloud encounters water, when danger and death divide between them the rule of the great deep. (*V* p.254)

As opposed to the members of the pensionnat, the Bretton family appear to Lucy as 'venturous and provident', a contrast which eventually subdues rather than inspires their convalescent guest. Living so closely with Graham she cannot but compare her own tentative egoism with his

robust embodiment of it: 'his delight was to feed that ravenous sentiment, without thought of the price of provender, or care for the cost of keeping it sleek and well-pampered' (*V* p.273).

The narrative reads more clearly, perhaps because less distorted by defence, in the aftermath of Lucy's breakdown. Lines are drawn to distinguish the reign of Reason from the flux of Imagination. In unwitting anticipation of Alchiarisi's confession to her son in Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, Lucy admits: 'Reason is vindictive as a devil: for me, she was always envenomed as a step-mother. If I have obeyed her it has chiefly been with the obedience of fear, not of love' (*V* p.308). Inhibitions, grounded in blunted libidinal ties, reveal their origins in aggression, such that loyalty to an ideal is cast in the mould of submission. The strength of these inhibitions suggests that Lucy Snowe's first loves were cast down prematurely, under the shadow of a threat rather than the veil of a promise, with subsequent renunciations riding on the back of defeat. It is an underlying hostility that prevents Lucy from responding to Graham's letters as expressions of love. Intended as a dam against loneliness and as a remedy for his patient's 'spectral illusion', Dr John's letters address Lucy with a familiarity which both assuages her demands and enflames her desires. Torn between pain and pleasure, Lucy finally stops both by burying the provoking letters between the roots of the Methuselah tree, where the convent girl's bones mythically lie. These letters, precious yet deadly to Lucy, represent an emotional sustenance and a sexual intimacy which is pleasurable yet frustrating. Lucy's decision to be rid of them follows a ferocious skirmish between Reason and Imagination, in which common sense and desire are pitted so evenly that Lucy is obliged to declare her verdict twice, to satisfy each party. Nowhere is the wrangle between giving love and hanging on to it more graphic than in Lucy's correspondence to Dr John:

> when, then, I had given expression to a closely-clinging and deeply-honouring attachment, an attachment that wanted to attract to itself and take into its own lot all that was painful in the destiny of its object; that would, if it could, have absorbed and conducted away all storms and lightnings from an existence viewed with a passion of solicitude - then, just at that moment, the doors of my heart would shake, bolt and bar would yield, Reason would leap in, vigorous and revengeful, snatch the full sheets, read, snear, erase, tear up, re-write, fold, seal, direct, and send a terse, curt missive of a page. She did right. (V p.335)[11]

With the enactment of this schism, the conditions for the Nun's reappearance are fulfilled. A compound of Reason and Death, the Nun incarnates what Lucy most desires, a maternal spiritual mentor, yet most fears, its hallucinated presence. In 'A Metapsychological Supplement to the Theory of Dreams' (1917), Freud proposes that hallucinations are inspired by a negative presence: within these visions the pressure of what is absent rebounds in such a way that images

from the unconscious are evoked to represent it.[12] At each sighting of the Nun Lucy is witness to a female mannequin which emerges from a nowhere of spatial absence. In her viewing of the Nun perceptions from without fuse with stimuli from within, creating a conviction of sight that slips past the controls through which it would otherwise pass. A face with no features, other than eyes, sweeps down on Lucy who, hugging this experience to herself, trusts no one with the confidence. But another pair of eyes, with a rival capacity to penetrate the psychical and a greater ability to interpret it benignly, breaks this cycle. Once again an experience of loneliness precedes a clash between self and other:

> as I looked up a cap-tassel, a brow, two eyes filled a pane of that window; the fixed gaze of those two eyes hit right against my own glance: they were watching me. I had not till that moment known that tears were on my cheek, but I felt them now' (V p.310).

These tears, that in their shedding go unnoticed by Lucy, are expressive of a sadness divorced from thought: it is a reunion of feeling and idea which Lucy's friendship to Monsieur Paul fosters. Their friendship expands what Lucy can afford to know about herself; bringing to the fore those parts of herself, for instance the exhibitionist, which had lain fallow. The value of this friendship lies in its potential to transform a persecutory surveillance, Lucy's experience of being watched from above and of being 'alienated from romance', into a fraternal liaison, where defences give way to impulses of community.

A further breakthrough, after the heroine's hysterical collapse, is her increased ability to fathom the feelings of others. In a mental note Lucy acknowledges that 'to feel, and to seize quickly another's feelings, are separate properties; a few constructions possess both, some neither' (*V* p.264). This skill is not widely held; moreover it is particularly lacking from those who, like Dr John, enjoy a marked integration of character. In the narrator's view a high degree of personal sufficiency encourages an equivalent self-regard, a view she extends to the female 'beauties' of Villette: 'With one of these beauties I once had the honour and rapture to be perfectly acquainted: the inert force of the deep, settled love she bore herself, was wonderful; it could only be surpassed by her proud impotency to care for any other living thing' (*V* p.287). It is then significant that Lucy's love for Monsieur Paul coincides with her realization of his selflessness; his long-standing habit of putting goodwill before self-interest. The narrator considers this the highest of virtues and, implicitly, the receipt of such attentions life's highest reward. Lucy also detects in Monsieur Paul a feminine element: this quality 'bound him to girls and women; to whom, rebel as he would, he could not disown his affinity, nor quite deny that, on the whole, he was better with them than with his own sex' (*V* p.426). In her growing sympathy with

Monsieur Paul, Lucy is encouraged to own herself in a less divided way, and to identify with a more expansive sexuality and identity than those modelled by Madame Beck.

The aim of Lucy's friendship with Monsieur Paul is far from explicit; none the less the effect of it, which places Lucy in an antithetic relation to Madame Beck, is soon obvious. This affinity between Monsieur Paul and Lucy is however limited; certainly it is antagonism rather than friendship that characterizes their initial relation. On the other side of Monsieur Paul's sympathetic generosity lies a chauvinism which, in seeking to curtail feminine ambition, ironically promotes it in Lucy:

> I was vaguely threatened with, I know not what doom, if ever I trespassed the limits proper to my own sex, and conceived a contraband appetite for unfeminine knowledge. Alas! I had no such appetite [...] Yet when Monsieur Paul sneered at me, I wanted to possess [..] more fully; his injustice stirred in me ambitious wishes - it imported a strong stimulus - it gave wings to aspiration. (*V* p.440)

Here, a parallel jolt to the one given by Madame Beck, is received by Lucy: far from a neutral engagement with learning, Lucy senses her urge to compete with and to counter her opponent, Monsieur Paul. Underneath this antagonism, a romantic shift toward a tormenting and yet loved mentor, is perceivable. The incidents which figure this transition are often slight - an intercepted note, a hand-made gift withheld, a pair of spectacles broken carelessly-yet the intensity of their description is unmistakable. In an analogous movement from young Polly's crush for Graham to mature Paulina's love for Dr John, Lucy Snowe is caught up in a shift from infatuation - hence the frequent references to 'hysterical schoolgirls' - to romantic courtship. This is the transgression Harriet Martineau objected so stridently to, when she observes that 'the heroine, who tells her own story, leaves the reader at last under the uncomfortable impression of her having either entertained a double love, or allowed one to supersede another without notification of the transition' (*Brontes* vol.4, p.43). This 'double love' is presumably one that subsumes the love of the child and the love of the adult, and its forbidden nature lies in its links with memories of satisfactions gained through an originarily loved object.

While the long vacation tests the heroine's ability to survive an episode of hysterical helplessness, a further challenge, instigated by Lucy's desire to be loved by Monsieur Paul, poses an even more intimate trial. This second challenge tests her ability to overcome hysterical strategies and to tackle reality in a forward as opposed to a backward seeking way. It involves choosing between an unsatisfactory yet secure present, and a pleasurable yet hazardous future. Brontë's use of the full moon to suggest ambition and satiety, as opposed to the diminutive sliver that attends each moon's passing, symbolizes this choice. In a characteristic rejoinder, aimed at

limiting Lucy's personal ambition, the narrator remarks: 'I suppose, Lucy Snowe, the orb of your life is not to be so rounded; for you the crescent-phase must suffice' (*V* p.451). Here the narrator steps back to talk of herself in the third person; not to gain intimacy but to effect a chastisement. Yet such a compromise is false; for in suppressing the ambitions attaching to aggressive wishes, Lucy increases her own surveillance and emotional restraint . Ultimately the way out lies, not in accepting a lesser fate, but in solving the riddle behind the rival to Monsieur Paul's affection - the unearthly fiancée, Justine Marie. The fear and hope this name inspires in Lucy is plain:

> Was I, then, to be frightened by Justine Marie? Was the picture of a pale dead nun to rise, an eternal barrier? [...] Madame Beck - Père Silas - you should not have suggested these questions. They were at once the deepest puzzle, the strongest obstruction, and the keenest stimulus, I had ever felt. (*V* p.491)

Lucy is forced to clarify her position in a plot of others' making; this time it is the strength of her attraction to Monsieur Paul that overrides any impulse to escape from conflict through withdrawal. Making her way forward means recognizing her status as an obstacle in Père Silas's plan, a scheme which subordinates romantic feeling in the name of higher and more lucrative ends.

In order to keep abreast of the events which suddenly impinge on her, Lucy engages in an energetic apprenticeship to meaning, one which echoes her earlier response to the arrival of Polly at Bretton: 'Where lay the link of junction, where the little clasp of this monastic necklace? I saw or felt union, but could not yet find the spot, or detect the means of connection' (*V* p.486). This 'little clasp' is malign, for it contains a threat to Lucy's romantic interest in Monsieur Paul. The narrator's quick succession of questions is expressive of what Freud describes in the 'Project for a Scientific Psychology' in terms of the mental effort involved in making something conscious. No mere act of perception, conscious awareness depends on an investment at the level of representation: an investment which permanently links a memory, an idea, and the sensation bound up with its recollection (*SE* 1 p.361). The value of thought process lies in its ability to curtail fantasy's spontaneous seeking after a perceptual identity: its task is to secure an identity of thought in a fallen reality, where the original object is irrecoverable and any path to regain it through consciousness is indirect (*SE* 5 p.602). Thus in *Villette* a hypnotic relation to reality, in which the subject is motivated from the direction of the unconscious and shifts of mood spark suppressed affects, gradually shifts to a therapeutic relation to reality, in which the subject makes contradictions between conscious and unconscious present in consciousness, and in doing so effects psychical change.

Two elements frustrate Lucy's desire to win Monsieur Paul's affections: the excess value she gives to Madame Beck as arbiter of destiny, and her tendency to realize desire negatively so that

an external defeat is becomes a passive triumph. As the novel's oracular ending implies, the first obstruction is more successfully countered than the second. To confront Madame Beck is, on a psychical level, to confront the Nun: in exposing this maternal threat Lucy lays bare the flimsy scarecrow which served to intimidate her. Stripped of a collusive identificatory tie with her mentor, Lucy abruptly reveals what went into Madame Beck's making:

> Two minutes I stood over Madame, feeling that the whole woman was in my power, because in some moods, such as the present - in some stimulated states of perception, like that of this instant - her habitual disguise, her mask and her domino, were to me a mere network reticulated with holes; and I saw underneath a being heartless, self-indulgent and ignoble. (*V* p.544)

A harshness of perception which up to this moment had been directed inward, is turned back on to its external model, stripped of its power of governance. At once, Lucy realizes that the school itself is permeable, as smooth of exit as of entry. The narrative tense jumps into the grammatical present, creating an immediacy and uncertainty lacking from the smooth past tense of earlier narrative sequences. Aware of a pressing need for movement, Lucy launches herself into the night:

> I wonder as I cross the threshold and step on the paved street, wonder at the strange ease with which this prison has been forced. It seems as if I had been pioneered invisibly, as if some dissolving force had gone before me; for myself, I have scarce made an effort. (*V* p.548)

This dissolution of barriers stimulates Lucy's senses - 'it seems as if I had been pioneered invisibly', as does the drug Madame Beck administered to calm her teacher's nerves. As Lucy tours the town of Villette a sense of curiosity, as marked as the fear which the same streets once provoked, urges her onward. Yet something diverts her, an impulse of detour which frustrates the heroine's conscious destination: 'I knew my route, yet it seemed as if I was hindered from pursuing it direct: now a sight, now a sound, called me aside, luring me down this alley and down that' (*V* pp.551-52).

An inhibition of perceptual identity - until the point of its coincidence with a perception acquired from without - goads Lucy forward, suspending psychical judgement until intellectual and sensory perceptions conjoin. Lucy's experience of longing during the nightlong fête scene works to awaken those dependencies which, up to then, were concertedly repressed. A final revelation occurs on the heroine's return to the dormitory after the excitement of the fête, when she leaps upon the last vestiges of the Nun, and connects the shreds of its apparel to the elopement of a coquettish schoolgirl the same evening. In this scene any remnants of Gothic intrigue are dashed; instead of Lucy's defiant aggression serving to increase an armoury of self-restraint (as followed the burial of Graham's love letters), this victory profits the ego at the expense of conscience. In the narrator's recounting of this episode, past and present tense converge:

> Tempered by late incidents, my nerves disdained hysteria. [...] In a moment, without exclamation, I had rushed on the haunted couch; nothing leapt out, or sprang, or stirred; all the movement was mine, so was all the life, the reality, the substance, the force; as my instinct felt. I tore her up - the incubus! I held her on high - the goblin! I shook her loose - the mystery! And down she fell - down all round me - down in shreds and fragments - and I trode upon her. (*V* p.569)

The fearful object, in however displaced a form, can be dispelled only when the violence and intimacy of it is endured, not as a catastrophe, but as a means to enlightenment. Then a 'figment' may be laid aside as a 'fragment', shorn of its compulsive allure. After this scene Lucy can allow for the satisfaction of desires from without. The powers of thought, a process which exploits memories for purposes remembered in advance, is reinforced by the action of jumping on the mannequin. As an action it confirms the existence of a world independent of Lucy, helping to set the heroine apart from the fantastic and affective colourings which occasionally fuse perception and reality.

Imagination, 'that kinder Power who holds my secret and sworn allegiance', in turn accursed and lauded throughout the novel, is once more embraced (*V* p.308). Delusion, inspired by a detachment from those relations which fuel 'that kinder Power', is put to rest. In her final witnessing of the Nun, Lucy sees into the prism in which its image is caught, and calls upon the workings of impulse to aid the judgement of the mind. An aggressive dread falls away to allow Lucy more benign and gainful relations to the world and others. Although those elements which obscure the workings of desire are laid to rest, Lucy still has the task of arranging a more pleasing future. It would seem that a companionable romance with Monsieur Paul, no matter how carefully constructed around mature love, fails to relieve the longing and resistance which accompanies it. During the precious hours Lucy spends alone with Monsieur Paul a reserve creeps back into the narrative: thus intimate conversations between the lovers are noticeable in their omission, in itself an echo of the narrator's tight-lipped recall of her youth. What is described of the lovers' happiness is metaphoric, nostalgic. Moreover when a wished-for yet tentative fulfilment occurs in the final chapter, not only must all narrative cease but what survives representation is steeped in religiosity. In the middle of this 'epilogue', the narrator enjoins that 'once in their lives some men and women go back to these first fresh great days of our great Sire and Mother - taste that grand morning's dew, bask in its sunrise' (*V* pp.591-92). This brief dawn doesn't last: in the closing of *Villette* the background imagery of tempest highlights the loss and resignation captured centre-stage, where desire risks being sunk without trace in turbulent seas. For all her efforts to trace and explode the mysteries in which she is ensnared, it would appear that Lucy Snowe is still vulnerable to affects of longing and to its corollary, resistance.

Lucy's liberation from triangular Oedipal tensions would seem a conditional one: as long as Monsieur Paul fails to return from the Indies neither, the reader presumes, will Lucy's terror surrounding her rival Madame Beck. Brontë's 'romance of alienation' comes a full circle, to rest, minus persecutory fears, in a tale of quiescence in which both intimacy and rivalry have been edged out. The point at which this circle turns, is Lucy's failure to loosen the hold of a maternal conscience invested with negative traits. *Villette* doesn't so much end as collapse back into itself, masking its leave-taking through allusions to myth. Its final sequence implies the narrator's acceptance of a consolation devoid of romance, and thus devoid of the potential for hysterical relations. Yet does it? On the level of fantasy it seems more likely that the narrator has secured an intimate address of 'I' and 'you' which, protected from the erosive effects of human intercourse, is enshrined in a creative fantasy. Within this hysterical address of 'I' and 'you' the loved one is projected - as Monsieur Paul does in his devotional love for Justine Marie - beyond mortality. Lucy Snowe, pre-eminently a girl with a dead father, experiences the disappearance of love as an emotional death. The only recourse open to a narrator who suffers this apprehension is to pre-empt this end through an act of passive mastery, in order that the narrator - and not fate - may effect the loved object's disappearance. Yet another, possibly more abiding reason for Monsieur Paul's watery grave, lies in his status as a psychical 'le maître' for Lucy Snowe. The influence he inspires in Lucy, a mixture of anxiety, reverence, and affection, can hardly be transposed into a more companionable lateral relation. Monsieur Paul ultimately figures as a 'Thou' for Lucy Snowe, as a superior mentor with whom sexual relations may not be contemplated. For all these reasons the hysterical structure, masked by a romantically obscure ending, remains in place in *Villette*, untouched by the storms that rage without.

When Charlotte Brontë came to end *Villette* she had Monsieur Paul die at sea. Later, at the urging of her father and friends, this ending was replaced by an open one, to allow for an ambiguous - and wishful - reading of it. To the author, however, the ending remained unequivocal: once the object that represents for the heroine the possibility of satisfaction has died, even at an imaginative level, it cannot be brought back to life. Not all unrequited love is hysterical, but certainly every hysterical love is unrequited: no lived satisfaction can ever match this mythical one, any more than a contemporary lover can rival an archaic one. By 'seeking the goddess in her chamber' the narrator Lucy Snowe comes very close to 'handling the veil' and to 'daring the dread glance' of the object she finds there. Yet her touch is so fleeting, and so dependent on metaphoric flights for its expression, that its value is transient. The consequences

for the novel itself are great: although *Villette* possesses the outward form of the *Bildungsroman*, its intricate workings are akin to Brontë's youthful Angrian tales, in which the influence of reality is but slight. None the less *Villette* shows clear signs of a narrative progression: from a psychological realism, through its temporary collapse, and finally back to a credible yet elliptical present. *Villette* is a lengthy book, but it could have been a lot longer. The diversions and doublings back of the text are persistent features, as is the compression of its descriptive details. Nor can it conclude as a narrative: because the narrator never declares herself, never fully admits her impassioned and possessive attachment to Monsieur Paul, the narrative is left hanging at the end of the last paragraph.

The final action is thus a negative one, focusing on the failure of Monsieur Paul's ship to land. The chamber of the goddess has seemingly retained its allure, an allure that is neither given up nor penetrated by the author who would worship it. In allowing this goddess her chamber the narrator is spared both the excitement which proximity to such a goddess would generate, and the risks of bringing her into a harsh daylight. This is the dilemma that Tolstoy, the subject of the next chapter, also faces. Tolstoy too is tantalized by a 'once more' of a satisfaction first established in intimacy with an important other. Unlike Balzac, who never really puts down his pen, Tolstoy and Brontë are as terrified as they are excited by what they may find at the heart of their narratives. Whereas Balzac is all too ready to penetrate the soul which carries the erotic secret, with Brontë there is the sense of the overall risk being greater, and that the best and the worst aspects of the mind have yet to be revealed. Whereas Lucy Snowe looks out into a world that she perceives as alien, Balzac's protagonists perceive a world which, however chaotic and exciting, is fundamentally good. For Brontë the dilemma of hysteria presents fatal dangers; for Balzac the problems it presents, while troublesome, remain superable.

NOTES

1. Letter to G. H. Lewes, 9 July 1953, in *The Brontës: Their Lives, Friendships and Correspondences in Four Volumes*, ed. by Thomas J. Wise and John A. Symington (Oxford: Oxford Head, 1933), vol.1, p.120. Further references to these volumes are given after quotations in the text as *Brontës*.

2. 1897, *The Complete Freud/Fliess Letters*, ed. by Jeffrey Masson (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1985), p.248.

3. *Villette*, ed. by Mark Lilly, Penguin, 1981 (first published in this edition in 1953). Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text as *V*. (p.)

4. Letter to G.H. Lewes, 17 October 1850. In a further reply to her publisher, George Smith, of 7 February 1853, Brontë wrote: 'The notice in the *Daily News* was undoubtedly written by Miss Martineau [...]. I have received a letter from her precisely to the same effect, marking the same point, and urging the same objections, similarly suggesting, too, a likeness to Balzac, whose works I have not read.' (*Brontës* vol. 4, p.44).

5. In observing Dr John, Lucy notes: 'It was not perhaps my business to observe the mystery of his bearing, or search out its origin or aim; but, placed as I was, I could hardly help it. He laid himself open to my observation, according to my presence in the room just that degree of notice and consequence a person of my exterior habitually expects: that is to say, about what is given to unobtrusive articles of furniture, chairs of ordinary joiner's work, and carpets of no striking pattern.' (*V* p.162)

6. An 'Haine et Identification Négative dans L'Hystérie', Dominique J. Geahchan formulates the paradox of hysterical identification in the following way: 'Ce pouvoir, nous voyons à l'evidence que l'hystérique en dispose mal. Confrontée à une imago maternelle envahissante et toute-puissante, c'est moins à l'aide des forces de maîtrise anale qu'elle l'affrontera, qu'en recourant à une défense empreinte d'oralité, *l'identification negative*. Par le truchement de cette identification, la fille se conforme à la mère, au dedans, cedendant qu'elle s'oppose à elle, au dehors, et la maintient ainsi comme un objet tout à la fois haï et désiré[...] Tout se passe, en effet, comme s'il agissait pour la fille de nier une introjection en négativant au dehors ce qui a été opéré par elle dedans. La mère, dans ces conditions n'est ni perdue - comme peut l'être l'objet dans l'identification narcissique - ni non plus abandonnée - comme peuvent le permettre, les identifications oedipiennes. Elle demeure l'objet d'un investissement privilégié que se poursuivra au cours des as, quels que soient les déplacements sur le père - ou sur tout autre homme - qui pourront intervenir par la suite. Et cet investissement aura toujours[...] une tonalité hostile, voire persecutrice. (*Revue Française Psychanalyse* 3-1973, 337-57, p.348)

7. Breuer, in his theoretical contribution to*Studies on Hysteria* (1895), explains this phenomenon: 'what gives hallucinations their objective character is an excitation of the perceptual apparatus[...]. If the perceptual organ is excited by a mnemic image, we must suppose that the organ's excitability has been changed in an abnormal direction, that this change is what makes hallucination possible.' (*SE* 2, p.189)

8. Sarah Kofman, *The Childhood of Art* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp.223-34.

9. The metaphor of shipwreck, coloured by the workings of the family romance, was familiar to Charlotte Brontë. In 1812 Maria Branwell wrote to her betrothed, the Reverend Patrick Bronte, a

letter to which Charlotte Brontë had access: 'On Saturday evening about the time you were writing the description of your imaginary shipwreck, I was reading and feeling the effects of a real one, having then received a letter from my sister giving me an account of the vessel, in which she had sent my box, being stranded on the coast of Devonshire, in consequence of which the box was dashed to pieces with the violence of the sea and all my little property, with the exception of a very few articles, swallowed up in the mighty deep' (*Brontës*, vol. 1, p.21). In 1821 Patrick Brontë, following the death of his wife, wrote to the Reverend J. Buckworth: 'I have generally succeeded pretty well in seasons of difficulty; but all the prudence and skill I could exercise would have availed me nothing had it not been for help *from above*. I looked to the *Lord* and He controuled (*sic*) the storm and levelled the waves and brought my vessel safe into the harbour. But no sooner was I there than another storm arose, more terrible than the former - one that shook every part of the mortal frame and often threatened it with dissolution.' (*Brontës*, vol.1, p.58)

9. An early poem, 'Memory', refers to the experience of memory as a permanent but empty trace:

The reflection departs from the river
When the tree that hung o'er is cut down,
But on Memory's calm current for ever
The shade without substance is thrown.

In *The Poems of Charlotte Brontë*, ed. by Tom Winnifreth (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), p.148.

10. Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1984) p.137.

11. The transgressive limits of the written word, as opposed to the potential of speech, pervades an internal dialogue in which Lucy vainly defends herself against 'envenomed' Reason: "But I have talked to Graham and you did not chide,' I pleaded. 'No,' said she, 'I needed not. Talk for you is a good discipline. You converse imperfectly. While you speak, there can be no oblivion of inferiority - no encouragement to delusion: pain, privation, penury stamp your language" (*V* p.308)

12. In 'A Metapsychological Supplement to the Theory of Dreams' (1917) this is made explicit: 'all hallucination starts from negative reality - of making something present that is absent.' (*SE* 14, p.232). Freud goes on to explain why the conviction of sight has a perceptual base: 'it seems justifiable to assume that belief in reality is bound up with perception through the senses. When once a thought has followed the path to regression as far back as to the unconscious memory-traces of objects and thence to perception, we accept the perception of it as real. So hallucination brings belief in reality with it.' (*SE* 14, p.230)

CHAPTER FOUR

Childhood, Boyhood, and Womanhood in Tolstoy's Early Narratives

Tolstoy's prowess as a writer of narratives, especially in his early pastoral works, relies on the continuous suppression of hysterical elements. The urgency that underlies these literary narratives suggests that it is only through portraying hysterical elements of his characters that the author is saved from hysterical elements of his own character. This creative prowess is bound up with Tolstoy's capacity to intimate and to characterize the susceptibilities of his characters; to represent equivocations of sexuality and identity in such a way that, however greatly the thoughts and acts of his characters may founder, the author's ability to record them is never questioned. Whereas Charlotte Brontë's narratives operate according to a denial of the family romance, shaping a plot which does its utmost to evade the nuclear complex - not least by situating its heroine forever on the other side of the window looking into a warm fireside - Tolstoy plays up the intrigues of the family romance to the hilt. Indeed there are moments in *Villette*, such as Lucy Snowe's long vacation in Brussels, when psychical links to loved objects - even those enshrined in memory - appear to lapse. In *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth*, Tolstoy's fictive autobiography of 1853-55, there is no such threat; however desperate Nicholas Irtenyev's plight becomes there is always the potential for the recall, even if in fantasy, of revered and loved objects. The power of this recall is hysterical, bearing on the psyche's refusal to withdraw an emotional allegiance away from archaic loved objects and to redirect it on to contemporary loved ones. Within Tolstoy's fictive autobiography, memory functions as a screen that continues to be impressed by enlivening impulses even after the story of youth has been told. While Lucy Snowe cares to say little about her personal origins, Nicholas Irtenyev can never say enough about his. Caught in diagonal identifications between an exciting and occasionally feckless father, a mother etherealized in early death, and divergent siblings, Nicholas Irtenyev employs a kind of narrative opportunism which upgrades his position from that of precocious enquirer, who asks all and sundry just how he came to be, to that of ironical youth, who observes his father's second marriage to a woman unworthy to succeed his mother. It is not insignificant that Nicholas, like Lucy Snowe, proceeds along the path toward 'knowing all', yet he pursues this aim with such ferocity that the narrative finally breaks off in dissatisfaction.

As a result of the incomplete resolution of the autobiographical trilogy, the ends left dangling at the end of *Youth* appear to be caught up again in *Family Happiness* (1859), a novella in which a sentimental and vivacious courtship is preliminary to its subdued unravelling. In this novella Nicholas Irtenyev's drive to secure a constant source of love is transposed, with the shift to a feminine first-person narrative, into a suppressed eroticism which, engaging with forbidden wishes, exacts censure. What is in *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth* a playful presentation of grown-up foibles and childhood jest is transformed, in the later work, into a prudent recounting of conjugal themes; with the exception that in *Family Happiness* it is a feminine lover and not a boyish narrator who assumes the burden of romantic disappointment and lapsed ideals. What in the fictive biography are hysterically delusive moments, in which an indomitable protagonist pushes his relations with intimates and his surrounds to an extremity which threatens sense, is chanelled in *Family Happiness* into contemplative brooding. In the novella, mature ideals are imposed on a nubile fiancée so as to extinguish in her a play of fantasy which the betrothed, to secure his place in a moral universe, has already renounced. Whereas a mother's devoted love is reward enough for Nicholas Irtenyev, the husband in *Family Happiness* finds woman's love fickle, a transient prize bestowed on the man who aligns himself with woman, no longer in the capacity of adoring child, but of disconsolate husband. Having given up the hysterical desire for prolonged sexualized relations to parental figures, both protagonists in *Family Happiness* find themselves uncomfortably alone within a framework of mature love, sanctioned by society and conscience. Whereas the fictive biography breaks off with dynamic ties of affection and hostility in full play, *Family Happiness* tails off in a way that not so much resolves as dissipates dynamic links. Such an ending is no conclusion, hence perhaps the novella form. On a psychical level, the novella's failure to achieve an adequate ending points to the narrator's unwillingness either to confront the fantasies the story feeds upon, or to dismiss them outright.

To an author dedicated to verisimilitude the suspicion that one's representation of reality is motivated by impulses that are wilfully conferred on memories, themselves selectively gleaned by the psyche, is best overlooked. None the less in *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth* the young narrator unabashedly expresses a tension between wish, fantasy, and imagination on the one side, and the restraints of thought, intellect, and memory on the other. A psychological minefield, Tolstoy's biography of Nicholas Irtenyev - a composite of self, siblings, and acquaintances - displays at each narrative turn, and there are many, the way in which memories may become hysterically traumatic with hindsight. The family romance to which Nicholas Irtenyev subscribes is a complex of ideas

and images which harbours traces of memories, wishes, and satisfactions; a combination which, in its permanent retention of affect, is lastingly compelling. Mixing impulses of phallic design and spontaneous defence, the family romance to which Nicholas is prey is a structure which, should he not keep his wits about him and one step ahead, threatens his exclusion from it. Its influence explains the narrative complexity which is a pervasive feature of *Childhood*. For instance when a youthful Nicholas is slighted by his first love, Sonya, the spontaneous distress of the young boy and the forsaken ruin of the young man who recalls it, are combined in one image: 'I was in the excited state of mind of a man who, having lost at cards more than he has in his pocket, is afraid to cast up his accounts and continues to stake desperately - not because he hopes to recover his losses but in order not to give himself time to stop and consider'.[1]

The narrative leap which separates *Childhood* from *Boyhood* reflects a psychical change which occurs when sexual impulses and constraining ideals begin to operate antithetically in adolescence. Hence in *Boyhood*, a pubescent Nicholas suffers the embarrassment of imaginatively reliving just what he would have liked to happen in various childish episodes, rather than simply recounting the event that prompted the incriminating impulse. Nicholas Irtenyev's physical beauty and finesse play a prominent role in this transition: remembering a humiliating boyhood scene in which he messes up a mazurka with a princess, Nicholas recalls:

> I stopped short, intending to make the same kind of figure the young man in the first couple had executed so beautifully. But just at the moment when I separated my feet and was preparing to spring the princess, circling quickly round me, looked at my legs with an expression of blank inquiry and amazement. This look undid me. I got so confused that instead of dancing I stamped my feet up and down on one spot in the strangest manner, neither in time to the music nor in relation to anything else, and at last came to a dead standstill. Everybody was staring at me: some in surprise, some with curiosity, some derisively, others with sympathy. (*CBY* p.80)

In these instances it is less a question of what Nicholas remembers than how he remembers it, that indicates the presence of hysterical conflicts and desires.

Shut in a small dark space after committing a minor rudeness Nicholas is not satisfied until he has communicated, in elaborate detail, an omnipotent fantasy which reduces so-called enemies to supplicants whom hover at the feet of 'Emperor Nicholas'. We do not know with any accuracy how long the young offender remains in the captivity that inspires this fantasy because such details, being factual and not emotive, cannot be gleaned from memories which - to the humiliation of the narrator - are ashamedly self-seeking. Sitting on a box in an upstairs trunk-room, the young Nicholas fantasizes freely about the ignoble deed which led to his punishment:

> I fancy myself free and out in the world. I enlist in the Hussars and go to war. The enemy bears down on

> me from all sides. I flourish my sabre and kill one, flourish it again and kill another - and a third. At last, faint from wounds and exhaustion, I fall to the ground with a cry of 'Victory!' The general rides up and asks: 'Where is he - where is our saviour?' I am pointed out to him, he flings himself on my neck and exclaims with tears of joy: 'Victory!' (*CBY* p.146)

This situation is hysterical less because of the actual event Nicholas imagines, than because of the language he uses to raise it to consciousness. What needs explaining is not so much those episodes which, in their recounting, inspire a hysterical narrative, but the psychical processes which give form to it. Granted his wish by the Tsar that he might kill one of the enemy - his French tutor St-Jérome - as a reward for his heroism, Nicholas continues his fantasy:

> I halt threateningly before St-Jérome and say: 'You were the cause of my misfortune - *á genoux!* But suddenly it occurs to me that the real St-Jérome may at any moment come in with the birch, and again I see myself, not as a general saving his country, but as a most wretched piteous creature. (*CBY* p.146)

However excited Nicholas Irtenyev becomes, a moderating voice restrains his most fantastic flights. In this way imagination provokes, in turn: momentary escape, considered reflection, hysterical omnipotence and, finally, sane humility.

Rather than hysterically suffering from reminiscences which are distorted by repression and symptom, as occurs to Lucy Snowe in *Villette*, in the tripartite *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth* the young narrator displays candid revelry in the business of recollection: being as quick to poke fun as he is to empathize with those characters whom, dressed up in fiction, populate childhood. Apart from Nicholas Irtenyev's glee at playing ventriloquist to at once loved and irritating family members, there remains an impulse to get behind the screen of memory, and to grasp more fully whatever detail occasioned it. At these nodal points - such as when the hero breaks the key to his father's portfolio on a filial errand to fetch a cigar - Nicholas expresses a demand for the truth which, in its impatience, is characteristic of puberty.

> On the table, leaning against the rail, among a thousand different objects lay an embroidered portfolio with a little padlock attached to it, and I felt curious to see whether the little key would fit it. My attempt met with complete success: the portfolio opened and I found a whole heap of papers inside. Curiosity prompted me so forcefully to find out what those papers were that I had no time to attend to the voice of conscience but set to work to examine the contents of the portfolio. (*CBY* p.140)

This momentary lapse, between a pressing curiosity and the slow workings of conscience, is typical of this narrative. This boy evidently knows more than he can afford to know morally: after this incident he himself admits, that 'the childish feeling of unconditional respect for all my elders and especially for papa was so strong in me that my mind instinctively refused to draw any conclusion whatever from what I saw (*CBY* p.140). The narrator's naivete can be maintained, at least on the level of narrative, only for as long as young Nicholas keeps a discrete distance between himself and his elders. In *Boyhood* this distance lessens, as when Nicholas begins to

identify with masculine peers and elders, in line with his strengthening wish to make love to maidservants and acquaintances - a wish which inevitably closes the adolescent gap between knowing and not knowing.

The limits of Nicholas's command of deep truths is borne out in a narrative which refuses to come alive beyond - or more correctly before - that point when narrative conjoins with memory. However steadfastly this boyish narrator instantiates hysteria in his duplicitous sweetheart Sonya, or in his grandmother's heartbreak over her daughter's untimely death, Nicholas's recounting of past events is itself shot through with hysterical elements (*CBY* p.100). This confluence is no accident: both neurosis and narrative constitute sustained efforts to put the past to rest, the one through reactivating it in bodily symptom and affective displacement, the other through disseminating it in creative production. Because they are both conceived in the workings of memory, neither hysteria nor literature can be deemed original; instead, as Sarah Kofman notes in *The Childhood of Art*, they are originary creations which proceed from the effort to realize the past psychically:

> What memories, hysteria, and works of art have in common is that they are phantasmal constructions from memory traces, and have a plastic or theatrical form. All three put the past into play while distorting it. By virtue of this relation to the memory trace, none of the three is really an invention. 2

Under this description the past can only come alive through a construction which potentially distorts it; this is the work of imagination, which relies on the triggering of a memory trace for its expression. Neither memory, hysteria, nor narrative are original: hence there is no true biography of Tolstoy of which *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth* is a displaced copy. Ultimately, it is in telling the story of Nicholas Irtenyev's childhood that the author constructs his own, a story which - because of its imaginative sway - loses the author any claim to history, to the synchronic representation of discrete events. Tolstoy is equally author of and subject to his literary inventions; in them he plays out and is played upon by memories which, invested with hysterical intensity, retain an allure which ignores time's passing.

Tolstoy's early pastoral narratives draw attention to an unending love affair which, detained in the unconscious, spills into the text through hysterical protagonists and recurring textual mechanisms. For Tolstoy's hysterical characters every intimate relation promises a renewal of a primordial relation which, founded with the commencement of memory, admits no rival. This potential comes to the fore when the hysterical defence, proof of a suppressed transgressive love, begins to wane: the effects of hysteria only emit noise when the psyche loosens its hold

over a forsworn love. What can be identified in Tolstoy's texts as hysterical elements are aspects of consciousness - thoughts, acts, defences, and feelings - which, tripped up in language, betray their origins in impulses that daren't speak their name. Like all the authors in this study it is only to the extent that Tolstoy overcomes hysterical reflexivity in himself, that he can represent it elsewhere - fictionally. In part this process of overcoming is achieved through the activity of writing fiction: by providing nascent desires with conscious links and symbolic forms, the author is able to bring unconscious elements deriving from familial structures into contact with conscious associations, and thereby to release fantasies - which in the hysteric remain pent up in the psyche-soma - into the narrative framework. Something of this process enlivens the narrator's consciousness when Nicholas's hapless tutor, Karl Ivanich, is dismissed. The narrator's particular desire to redeem his tutor's story by telling it well, whatever its truth-value, works as an echo of the larger narrative project, which is the fictive biography of Nicholas Irtenyev:

> Whether it really was the history of his life or whether it was the product of his imagination evolved during the lonely time he spent in our house, and which he had from endless repetition come to believe in himself, or whether he merely embellished the actual events of his life with fantastic additions, I have never been able to decide. On the one hand there was too much lively feeling and orderly consistency - paramount tokens of veracity - in its recital for it not to be credible. On the other hand there was too much poetic beauty about his account, so that its very beauty tended to raise doubts. (*CBY* p.128)

How much of little Nicholas's own story arises out of loneliness, imagination, and fantasy, and how much his narrative is to be taken as a straight biography of its subject, is similarly open to debate.

By transferring equivocations relating to sexuality, identity, and transcendence on to a cast of characters who are inspired by memories of his own extended family, the author of *Childhood, Boyhood Youth* was free, as in an extended childhood game, to direct a family romance that abets his protagonist's interests. As these early narratives show, this romance eluded final authorial direction, instead they spawned larger and ever more unwieldy casts of characters for what is ultimately a cast of two - mother and son, yet inevitably a cast of three - mother, father, and son. In Tolstoy's pastoral narratives the family romance provides a powerful motive force to an author who seeks to project a nostalgic past on to a narrative present. Tolstoy's drive to take up authorship is implicitly hysterical, and is linked to the realization that it is only by creating one's origins anew in literature that those origins may come alive to oneself. It is only by practising the hysterical lie, what Freud refers to as the *proton pseudo*, that one can bring memories to the surface via the screen images to which they are attached, and this on the understanding that what cannot be brought directly to consciousness - the unconscious - must rely on another scene to represent it (*SE* 1 pp.352-59). Nowhere is this demand more acute, in Nicholas Irtenyev's biography, than in the

protagonist's appeal to maternity as the site of subjective origin. The only lasting memories this author can avail himself of in regard to a mother who in reality died before his conscious memory began, memories which alleviate sensations of longing and fear, are those which Nicholas Irtenyev invokes in *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth*. While in his 'Recollections', an elderly Tolstoy admits to having no memory image of his mother's face, Nicholas Irtenyev, steadfast attendant at his beloved mother's wake, recalls his mother's visage vividly.3

Standing on a chair at his mother's laying out, young Nicholas is free to engage in an imaginative reverie, as it crosses over from pleasure to unpleasure before returning, after a lapse from consciousness, back to 'ineffable' pleasure once more.

> I gazed and felt that some incomprehensible, irresistible power attracted my eyes to that lifeless face. I did not take my eyes from it, yet my imagination sketched for me one picture after another of pulsing life and happiness. I kept forgetting that the dead body which lay before me and which I gazed at so absently, as on some object that had nothing to do with my memories, was *she*. I imagined her now in one, now in another situation: alive, gay and smiling; then suddenly some feature in the pale face before my eyes arrested my attention and I remembered the dreadful reality, and shuddered but continued to look. Then again visions replaced the reality, to be shattered by the consciousness of the reality. At last my imagination grew weary, it ceased to deceive me. The consciousness of the reality vanished too and I became oblivious of everything. I do not know how long I remained in this state, nor what it was: I only know that for a time I ceased to be aware of my existence and experienced a kind of exalted, ineffably sweet, sad happiness. (*CBY* p.93)

The concentration, daydreaming, lapse from consciousness, and melancholy exultation of Nicholas at his mother's lying-in, together awaken desires to reanimate a woman who, opaque to the author's memory, continues to haunt him imaginatively. Dead to lived memory, Tolstoy's maternal muse is a powerful fiction which inflects the author's collected works. Like Tolstoy's elder brother's eudemonic green stick which promises tranquillity to its finder, this maternal muse offers its seeker a luminosity and temperance beyond all earthly tensions characterized as masculine. Ordained at the limits of consciousness, the maternal muse, in its assurance of a beneficent universe, is yet a taunt against it; animated by wishful elements this muse is a necessary yet hypothetical figure. Tolstoy's literary creativity is thus coloured by affective reminiscences in which imagination and memory liaise. Memory is always suspect in the eyes of an author who, at his most chastizing, views its creations as tantamount to artifice. None the less the density of prose in *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth* suggests that despite its fictive frame, the narrator hopes to capture some essential quality of filial relations through it. Rather than acknowledging that memory traces are, through the labile workings of fantasy, construed by consciousness in the act of remembering them, the narrator seeks to make memory illumine a reality prior to the work of

consciousness; an attitude which implies the existence of a universe where, given not divined, truths pre-exist their revelation.

The hysterical experience of void, to which Nicholas Irtenyev is intermittently prey, is perhaps only imaginatively organized around maternal death; it might also be explained by an implied distinction between a revelatory universe, in which universal order is made known to a subject who then imitates it, and a created universe, in which meaning is gleaned from individual acts unaided by transcendent guidance. Within a created universe, imagination and memory are a tease: promising everything, the provision of fantasy stimulated by intense memories might be considered a simulacrum for what can only exist in its formal representation - reality. In a world which lacks transcendence, creativity is culpable to the degree it brings wishes into play and leaves them hanging; thus when imaginative blessings turn to scourge, Nicholas Irtenyev erupts in disgust for cultivated pleasures and in disdain for the egoism which sustains them - both reversals which are a constant of this author's equivocal relation to culture.

The narrator's fluctuating attitudes to civilized virtues emerge clearly in relation to that prized attribute of the gentleman, 'comme il faut':

> I considered *comme il faut* not merely an important plus, an admirable quality, a perfection I was anxious to achieve, but an indispensable condition of life without which there could be no happiness, no glory, nor anything good in the world. [...] The greatest evil this idea wrought in me lay in my conviction that the *comme il faut* was a self-sufficient status in society [...] that, having attained this state, he was already fulfilling his destiny and was even superior to the majority of mankind. (*CBY* p.270)

From these early narratives one might suppose that despite the gains offered by civilized maturity, nought can make good life's deficits; as history's orphan Nicholas appears never to forgive fortune her wilful acts. In *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth* the intimate embrace which unites the beginning of life and the final falling away from it acts to frame the young narrator's hysterical attitudes to that which binds life - love: in which to give everything in love is at the same time to chance becoming nothing. Throughout these early pastoral works a division can be traced, between ties of affection which are fervently loyal to hearth and family, and flagrant displays of passion which are indifferent to formal bonds. The way in which Nicholas entertains, in turn, temptation and scorn for the housemaid Masha, illustrates this narrator's insecurity in matters of love. Ten years after the impressionable fourteen-year-old Nicholas succumbs to Masha's attractions, this maid continues to excite the narrator: 'She was very pretty but I am afraid to describe her lest my imagination should again present to me the bewitching and delusive image which filled my mind at the time of my infatuation (*CBY* p.123). This reluctance to describe Masha in detail seems to derive from the

narrator's fear of those memory traces in which the images of this tantalizing housemaid are kept.

Generative of longing and resistance, *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth* is not so much ambivalent - which would assume a confluence of positive and negative impulses toward a loved one, as expressive of a vacillation between loving and repulsing impulses for the same loved object. The protagonist is apt to display a sudden and vengeful turning away from what was once loved, for example Nicholas's hapless French tutor; a movement which risks damage of an object that both invites and restrains desire. Reflecting upon the tormenting tutor St-Jérome, Nicholas confesses:

> Yes, it was real hatred - not the hatred we only read about in novels, which I do not believe in, hatred that is supposed to find satisfaction in doing some one harm - but the hatred that fills you with overpowering aversion for a person who, however, deserves your respect, yet whose hair, his neck, the way he walks, the sound of his voice, his whole person, his every gesture are repulsive to you, and at the same time some unaccountable force draws you to him and compels you to follow his slightest acts with uneasy attention. Such was the feeling I experienced for St-Jérome. (*CBY* p.151)

The hystericization of intimate relations bound up with these intense feelings is obvious: because of them the protagonist is compelled to reject a loved object that also evinces his undying fascination. This paradoxical hold confounds Nicholas, engaging him in untying and tying the emotional tie, a labour which alternately leads him to pitches of excitement and troughs of exhaustion.

To continue the adoration of a mother who never existed for oneself alone, except in fantasy, proves a source of joy and despair to a son who continues his devotion; hysterically solded to an image of remaindered love, Nicholas Irtenyev is staunch in his worship of a maternal muse. This is nowhere more conspicuous than when Nicholas is captivated by his mother's sonorous piano playing, catalyst to a host of feelings which course through not just the boy's imagination but his body too. During his rapt listening Nicholas's subdued excitement shifts to wistful melancholy; both are awakened by a concerto which, linked in family myth to the mother's performance of it, resonates with unconscious feeling:

> Mamma was playing the second concerto of Field, her music-master. I sat day-dreaming, and airy luminous transparent recollections appeared in my imagination. She started playing Beethoven's *Sonaté pathétique* and my memories became sad, oppressive, and gloomy. Mamma often played those two pieces and so I well remember the feelings they aroused in me. They resembled memories - but memories of what? It almost seemed as if I were remembering something that had never been. (*CBY* p.40)

Within the concerto's phrasing lies the hysterical 'something' which, finally incommunicable in language, conveys to the narrator the spirit of first lost loves. To remember 'something that had never been' is less to recall a memory to mind than to savour a feeling coming into the mind, in the

form of affect, for which the image and idea associated with it have undergone repression. A telling complication, responsible perhaps for this thought's provocation, presents itself: attention to the music master, inspiration for the mother's eloquence, hints at a dissymmetry which excludes the child from his mother's passions - except in so far as he can imaginatively organize, through fantasy, the excitement they produce in him. It is almost as if music, in its notation of fleeting emotions, transmits to the child feelings he could not by himself have had. Yet here lies the deceit; for these shadowy feelings are mapped on to Nicholas by an author who, in representing a fictive childhood which in reality 'had never been', none the less impresses that world with the conviction of what 'must have been' - though this in accordance with emotions dictated by the family romance.

Music has the status of hysterical affect in Tolstoy's pastoral narratives: subsuming the potential for what is most sublime and most contemptible in human passion, music sweeps through the soul that submits to it, an agent from within. For Tolstoy music brings suppressed feelings and fantasies into awareness with an immediacy and penetration less readily achieved by language. With the passing years the intensity of Nicholas Irtenyev's parental bonds pass into the latent obscurity of boyhood, during which the 'airy luminous' feelings of child and boy in the presence of music, undergo a definite shift. When in an early draft of *Youth*, a pubescent narrator ruminates on the significance of music, although the pleasures he draws on derive from infancy, his articulation of them has been transformed:

> Music acts neither on reason nor on imagination. When I listen to music I think of nothing and do not imagine anything, but some strange, delightful feeling fills my soul to such an extent that I lose consciousness of my existence. It is a memory-feeling. But a memory of what? Though the sensation is powerful, the recollection is obscure. It seems as if one were remembering something that never occurred.4

The youth experiences music deeply, as if a honeyed draught, but conjoins these feelings less immediately to images than does the child; imaginatively vacant, the youth's senses are steeped in feelings for which he can find no words. Daydreams of childhood, unattended by concrete thoughts, give way to a blissful lapse from consciousness which, like the fantasy it stems from, dissolves on waking. The lofty fantasy of childhood becomes the opaque reverie of boyhood; in both music, which Tolstoy called 'the memory of the emotions', sounds inner chords that, in communicating relations between one feeling and the next, have the capacity to represent what in reality 'never occurred'.5

The 'memory-feeling' that Nicholas speaks of is distinct from both reason and imagination,

originating in memory traces which are not yet translated into the language of conscious sense. Capable of emotional epiphany, music in *Youth* is at one time the most exalted expression of Nicholas's beloved, and at the next the plodding sonata of his melody-mad sister. Nicholas, an ardent pianist in *Youth*, confesses, '[I] went into raptures when Lyuba [his sister] played the *Sonate pathétique* though, if the truth be told, I had long been heartily sick of it' (*CBY* p.266). In various episodes of Tolstoy's trilogy, music, poetry, and fiction all threaten to upset Nicholas from a world in which the individual is master of consciousness. To be passive to cultural experiences which have the capacity to revive such 'memory-feelings' is to risk being feminized by them; thus in this piano scene the narrator, reacting to emotions poked into him as if from without, is reluctant to own the exultation the sonata inspires in him as his own. Increasingly for Nicholas Irtenyev all the arts harbour an implicit threat; a threat which causes their enjoyment to prompt sudden swings of mood, from emotive longing to the heady desire for creative - and potentially perverse - artifice.

Taking his cue from Dickens's contemporaneous childhood memoir, *David Copperfield*, Tolstoy's *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth* constructs a life which having 'never been' historically, shows signs of being all the more longed for emotionally.[6] Throughout this trilogy the author demonstrates how the past - subject to unruly imagination - is eminently falsifiable, due to the psyche's tendency to distort what it perceives in the act of perceiving it. Tolstoy's pastoral trilogy comes to life through all those devices the narrator employs to touch up recollection and to supplement memory, flourishes which suggest that any motivated representation of the past might also be a contrivance to surpass it imaginatively.[7] Sarah Kofman, in her study of art and memory *The Childhood of Art*, makes the retrospective workings of memory identical with the operations of meaning:

> Memories are originary substitutive formations that supplement the lack of meaning in past experience. Memory is always already a matter of imagination, just as meaning, rather than being given in the present, is constructed after the fact.8

Tolstoy's success in creating a childhood fiction which satisfies both memory and sense relies on the coupling of two narratives: the imaginative poem of his mother and the fractious tale of his father. Although both parents loom larger than life within the prose they enliven, the contrast between them is striking, in that the cameo of the mother works as a prelude to the rollicking tale of his father, which sets the narrative tempo. Whereas Nicholas's mother is represented as an eternal idea, an embellished image from which continuous consolation is drawn, the father is eavesdropped on at unseemly moments, identified with in passing weaknesses, and spied on with an avidity that occasionally borders on fear. Unsurprisingly, the boy can never get enough of

the mother's presence:

> She puts her other hand round the back of my head and her slender fingers run over my neck, tickling me. It is quiet and half dark in the room; I feel all quivery with being tickled and roused from sleep; mamma is sitting close beside me; she touches me; I am aware of her scent and her voice. (*CBY* p.53)

In contrast, the father is depicted with a specificity and objectivity which is missing from the airy vision of the mother:

> He was a man of the last century and possessed that indefinable chivalry of character and spirit of enterprise, the self-confidence, amiability and sensuality which were common to the youth of that period. He regarded the young people of our day with a contempt arising partly from an innate pride and partly from a secret feeling of vexation that he could not in our time enjoy either the influence or the success he had had in his own. The two chief passions of his life were cards and women: he had won several million roubles in the course of his life and had had affairs with innumerable women of all classes. (*CBY* p.38)

Whereas the mother's presence is continually sought after by the boy, being glimpsed as through a prism, the father intrudes on the boy at whatever moment he is least expected.

The eulogized absence of the mother contrasts with the neglect, riven with sudden kindnesses, of the father. Whereas a failure to respond to Nicholas's cries ennobles the mother in the son's eyes, the father is elevated as an object of fear and envy exactly proportionate to his refusal to fall in with his son's desires. In Nicholas's concise family romance, the father is epilogue to a tale which fosters the primacy of the child, while the mother, in turns hallowed angel and sacrificial lamb, is unerringly venerated. The father's presence sets up nervous shocks and excitement in the son while the mother's presence evokes sensory, poetical gestures of looks, touch, voice, and smile. When, during his father's dealings with a long-suffering steward, Nicholas is nudged brusquely from the desk, the boy observes, 'I did not understand whether this was a caress or a rebuke but at all events I kissed the large muscular hand that lay on my shoulder' (*CBY* p.21). In contrast, the mere touch of Nicholas's mother is expressive of a caress: 'the sound of her voice is so sweet, so warm. Just the sound of it goes to my heart!' (*CBY* p.52). Nicholas's revelation of an asymmetry at the heart of his parent's relations proves to be a mixed one. While the father's philandering nature leaves his position free for a mother's devoted son, it also obstructs any straightforward identification between son and father. Whereas identification with the father qualifies the son's fidelity to the mother, to fail to do so, and to sidestep the paternal bond in favour of a maternal solicitude, involves the realization that the mother's desire, in so far as it creates a desiring woman of her, carries her beyond the child's province.

In *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth* the influence of both parents is rendered negligible through the workings of family romance. The only recourse open to a son who, however favoured by

destiny, lacks parental and - displacedly - transcendent guidance, is the reign of will. Only through a continual exercise of will can Nicholas's life be organized through thought and action; only through a careful synchrony of deed and ambition can a future, based on the overcoming of a hysterical present, be secured. To demur from such rule is to tempt virtue's collapse; it is to leave a conscientious adolescence behind and to discover what lies behind it, phallic impulse - as metaphorized by marauding bears, relentless snowstorms, and lascivious servants girls. To follow one's desires slavishly such that the good disappears from sight, for Tolstoy's narrators of this period, is to give up the implicit aim in all right-minded activity, moral continuity. '*Le mieux est l'ennemi du bien*', quotes the narrator of *Family Happiness*: the breaking up of virtue by phallic impulse works to puncture the fond recall of memory and to obscure the glass of conscience.[9] It is, then, an access of will that signals Nicholas's progress from the hysterical son of an adored and adoring mother, to the ambitious son of a spirited and morally dubious father. The greatest obstacle to Nicholas's youthful virtue is that which, instantiated in flesh, is woman: in *Youth* it appears that the project of woman is to establish a dominion of the carnal over the spiritual, and this through the glitter of her wares. The corruption of boyish virtue by vanity, diseased limb of the good, is assigned by the narrator to women whom, grouped together, are seen as shareholders in the promotion of weakness. In Tolstoy's diaries of the 1850s, vanity is characterized as 'a sort of immature love of fame, a sort of self-love transferred to the opinions of others - a vain man loves himself not as he is but as he appears to others to be'.[10] The vain man, like the hysterical woman, loves himself from the other side: for only from the other's perspective may vanity guarantee the allure of one's attractions. Increasingly the search undertaken by the youthful Nicholas is less for a perfect object that might satisfy his demand for intimacy, than for a perfect relationship which identifies the couple who sustain it with a common yet superior aim. Yet all the while love's ultimate blessing finds its issue in a transparent love of childhood which, with its roots in family love, is in the best sense invisible. As Tolstoy relates in his 'Recollections', 'the love of others is a natural state of the soul, or rather a natural relation to people, and when that state exists one does not notice it' - presumably because it is the very thing that imbues life with meaning.[11]

It is hardly surprising that shortly after Nicholas Irtenyev describes his father's re-marriage to a woman the stepson considers second-best, *Youth* breaks off. Unimpressed by the new object of his father's affections, Nicholas is forced to look elsewhere: precisely beyond the domain of the family and the affective complex which belongs to it. Between the writing of *Childhood*, *Boyhood*,

Youth and the appearance of *Family Happiness*, a lapse of four years, a noticeable shift takes place. In *Family Happiness* woman is subject to suspicion rather than reverence, while marriage, a state which comes in for sideways criticism in the trilogy, is given an almost transcendent status. Like the eudemonic green stick which among Tolstoy and his brothers, promised repose to its finder, marriage is an ideal in *Family Happiness* - and this despite the troubles the marital couple suffer. Although marriage is represented as an ideal in this novella, it is none the less inflected by the backward workings of memory, wish, and imagination. The tensions inspired by a hysterically-inclined masculine protagonist in the earlier trilogy is solved, at least superficially, by invoking a hysterical feminine protagonist in *Family Happiness*. In the later work the position of masculine virtue is embodied by Sergei Mihailych, while the unstable position of hysterical narrator is assumed by Masha. *Family Happiness* is the story of an impossible demand made on love under the guise of marriage: less that Mihailych should be unconditionally loved than that his values should be unconditionally shared; in this resides his trust in the other. Although a commitment to the happiness of others is an unswerving aim in Sergei Mihailych's courtship of the heroine, its fulfilment finally depends on this aim being held by both partners. That Sergei's ideals should be mapped on to a feminine partner appears fraught from outset; for in warning his beloved of the vanity of human wishes, especially those originating in egoism, Sergei awakens Masha to their attraction.

Sergei's courtship of Masha, in the opening scenes of *Family Happiness*, presumes that love is an emotional compound which stops each partner sliding away from the exercise of will and a commitment to value. The small print of such a proposal suggests that love and marriage proffer identity through unity: thus the beloved succeeds as the model for the lover's identification to the degree she incarnates ideal, and in this case sentimental, forms of love. Sergei's romantic courtship conceals a pedagogic aim; not by chance the epigraph for *Family Happiness* is taken from Michelet, 'Il faut que tu crée ta femme'.[12] This educative thrust is crucial; its aim is not only to inculcate amorous graces in the loved one, but also to bolster the fiancé's confidence in a sexuality delimited by culture. Behind the narrator's admiration for conjugality lies a concern for self-management; for a frame which, in alleviating personal vigilance, regulates the spendthrift ways of impulse. When a girlish narrator communicates the intense feelings her relation to Sergei rouses in her, the 'strange idea' of purifying herself of them suddenly strikes her:

> I was frightened at my own feelings - heaven knows to what length they might lead me. I remembered his embarrassment and mine when I jumped down to him in the orchard, and my heart grew very heavy. Tears streamed down my cheeks and I began to pray. And a strange idea came to me, reassuring me

> and bringing hope: I resolved to begin fasting that very day and prepare myself for Communion on my birthday, and on that day to become his betrothed. (*CBY* p.39)

What is lacking internally by way of precepts that organize potentially overwhelming desires is thus erected outside, through commended ideals: foil to a violence within, marriage in *Family Happiness* is valued for its control of the conflicts generated by passionate and implicitly hysterical relations.

There is however more at stake in the transition from the trilogy *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth* to the novella *Family Happiness*. than a shift from youthful to mature love: Although Tolstoy's insight that the conscious life of man is a thing apart from his place in the natural and social worlds plays an essential role in *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth*, it is the subtleties of this disaffinity that enliven *Family Happiness*. The latter novel, more strongly than the earlier, elaborates Tolstoy's view that all evil and pathology reflect a moral sickness, and that this sickness results from impulsive acts being contemplated in a remorse that exceeds remorse's proper function. The representational forms of history and romance are inadequate for the elaboration of Tolstoy's views: neither the retelling of events in themselves, nor the wishful striving after personal happiness, are sufficient models for human experience. Thus in *Family Happiness* the author presents a history of intimacy which sheds light on the strains implicit in romance. In keeping with this novel's divergent aims, the critical reception of *Family Happiness* was, and still is, various.[13] This finds an echo in the failure to agree on an English title: *Domestic Happiness, Happily Ever After,* and *Family Happiness* - all suggest a necessary roughness of translation. Much critical attention is given to the use of a female narrator as the heroine, an adoption Edward Wasiolek connects to the author's admiration for the governess's voice in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, a novel Tolstoy read abroad in 1857.[14] Renato Poggioli makes the narrator's feminine voice instrumental to the work:

> The very fact that *Domestic Happiness* is the only story by Tolstoy in which a woman speaks in the first person may suffice to suggest the author's stand toward the pastoral or quasi-pastoral conception of love: a conception which he could envision only by projecting it outside of both his own sex and himself.15

This would suggest that it is only by adopting a feminine perspective that Tolstoy is able to represent pastoral love; the feminine voice working to lift an inhibition from a love which, originating in childhood, issues both omnipotence and powerlessness.

In *Family Happiness* a pastoral love which subsumes man and nature in a common destiny is projected on to a feminine narrator, through whom it is lauded as an ideal and then, following

love's collapse, pitied as an object of compassion. No critical evaluation can equal the author's own vituperative rejection of *Family Happiness*. Tolstoy's curse against his novella in proof form is merciless, decrying as abject what was conceived in wishful reverie. In shrill correspondence to his publisher, the author's hand shakes hysterically:

> What have I done with my *Family Happiness*! Only here and now, having come to my senses at leisure and having read the proofs yet sent me of the second part, have I come to see what disgraceful s... this loathsome work is - a blemish on me, not only as an author, but as a man.15

It is hard to reconcile this outburst with the unassuming novel which provoked it, summarized in Victor Terras's *A Handbook of Russian Literature,* as 'an unexciting story of courtship, early marital bliss, subsequent marital problems, and eventual compromises, all from a young woman's point of view and in the prim, conventionally proper, but perceptive style of a Victorian 'lady-writer".[17] This tale of mild and mannered charm yet met, on publication, with its author's condemnation for being nothing but 'shameful trash, disgusting filth, and a moral and artistic botch'.[18] Clearly something lies compressed within the folds of *Family Happiness* to have upset its author so profoundly. This incongruent element may be described as an uncanny and unforeseen mirroring effect which rebounds on its author at certain energetic moments in the plot. Tolstoy's commitment to writing is often applauded for its re-examination of the familiar, for its attention to those ordinary aspects of experience which make the observable world occasionally strange.

In *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth* a heightened self-consciousness, bordering on insanity, dawns on young Nicholas when it appears to him that 'objects were not real at all but images which appeared when I directed my attention to them'; suggesting a potency of vision on which the boy's sense of reality depends. Chasing his tail in a pubescent and speculative dark, Nicholas becomes more and more convinced that 'objects do not exist but only my relation to them exists' (*CBY* p.159). In seeking after that part of himself that can only be located in his relations to objects and not in objects themselves, Nicholas hysterically suffers his own disappearance, in so far as his identity is tied to a substantive reality and not a reflected image. This strangeness appears in a somewhat different guise when Nicholas encounters it in his relations to others, rather than in solitude. During a scene in *Youth* which is later reworked in *Family Happiness,* Nicholas is witness for a second time to the joy, melancholy, and tenderness that the performance of the *Sonaté pathétique* evokes in him. This time it is jealousy and not whimsy which overwhelms the youthful Nicholas, when he observes his father overcome by the uncanny reflection of his late wife in his daughter. A tremulous brother records:

> I have never seen such a family likeness as there was between my sister and my mother [...] Lyuba smoothed the folds of her dress in exactly the same manner, turned the pages from the top with her left

> hand as *mamma* had, and pounded the keys with her fist when she was vexed at not being able to master a difficult passage and cried, 'Oh dear!' and there was the same inimitable delicacy and precision in her playing of the beautiful piece of Field's. (*CBY* p.164).

Long suppressed desires, touching on incest, inspire in Nicholas the effect of *déjà vu*, creating an equivalence between sister and mother. In this unsettling coincidence Nicholas identifies with his father in both the positive Oedipal sense of finding Lyuba's beauty beguiling, and in the negative sense of experiencing a hysterical loyalty to the mother that makes him recoil from a lustful father. At the conclusion of '*mamma*'s piece' Nicholas watches his father as he takes Lyuba's 'head in his two hands and began kissing her on the forehead and eyes with such tenderness as I have never seen in him before' (*CBY* p.165). Nicholas's conflict is compounded when, in a related impulse, the father stops a pretty servant in the corridor and compliments her on her looks. It is thus in the crossing over between this scene in *Youth* and related piano-playing scenes in *Family Happiness* that unresolved aspects of the family romance emerge: almost as if the knotted fabric of memory compels the author to project his unfinished romance on to a further narrative which promises to join its loose ends. Accordingly the maidservant Masha, an unresolved and tangential character in the trilogy, undergoes a transformation to appear as the narrator and heroine of *Family Happiness*.

What is at stake in all these pastoral works is the game of love itself, a game during which - as happens to Nicholas Irtenyev - it is the participants wont to look round when the other isn't looking in order to ensure the play's continuance. The element which so keenly struck Tolstoy as abhorrent in *Family Happiness* could well be a strangeness which has a narcissistic base. When in his introduction to 'The Uncanny' (1919), Freud outlines extant theories on what strikes the psyche as strange, he introduces the idea of a supplement or a concealed factor as a necessary ingredient: 'some new things are frightening but not by any means all. Something has to be added to what is novel and unfamiliar in order to make it uncanny' (*SE* 17, p.221). Freud, like Tolstoy's narrators in the early pastoral works, is referring to the 'something' which links the unfamiliar to the familiar. He goes on to suggest that this 'something' can be a particular trait of the object, a trait which reflects back to the perceiving subject a hidden aspect of himself. An uncanny experience might be triggered by a signifier - a facial feature or a piece of clothing - previously lost to conscious sight and hence to awareness. Given this premise it is possible that what horrified Tolstoy on receiving proofs for his romantic novella was a desiring image of himself, vivified by a female narrator. Like young Nicholas Irtenyev - driven to abruptly turning round upon objects to reassure himself of their independent existence - Tolstoy was perhaps shocked to find inflections of himself in a heroine who, at least in the first part of the novella, figures faith in a world sustained by loving relations.

In *Family Happiness*, a modern reworking of Beauty and the Beast, an age gap of nineteen years between the lovers contrasts the youth and beauty of the heroine Masha with the melancholy onset of middle-age in Sergei Mihailych: a man who, in his six-year absence from Masha's family, 'had grown side-whiskers which were very unbecoming' (*FH* p.15). *Family Happiness* begins in conformity with Florence Nightingale's stipulation in *Cassandra* that every novelistic heroine should display 'no family ties' and 'almost *invariably* no mother'.[18] As the first-person narrator, Masha has a double claim to such status, given the successive deaths of her parents before the novella begins. Wandering aimlessly over a house run by loyal servants and an estate beset by financial troubles, Masha is a heroine in search of an author, of 'un raison d'être', and specifically of an organizing principle with which to commence her narration. The novel opens *in medias res,* in rural seclusion; grief for Masha's mother shrouds the snow-encased house, a metaphor for the state of the daughter's soul. The young narrator's unease contrasts with the outward harmony of the house and its occupants, a narrative technique which Freud observes in 'The Uncanny' is conducive to the introduction of the strange into the familiar. Freud's claim in this paper is that an uncanny experience, produced by the reappearance of a surmounted infantile belief, 'retains its character not only in experience but in fiction as well, so long as the setting is one of material reality' (*SE* 17, p.251).

Following the successive deaths of her parents Masha, along with her childish sister and old nurse, finds herself fortune's orphan. The daughter's unhappiness is mingled with resentment for the passing away of her youth; besides a morbid impulse 'to peep into that cold empty room', where her mother had recently been lain out, Masha is overcome by an experience of 'that helpless dreariness, from which by myself I had neither the strength nor even the will to escape' (*FH* p.13; p.14). When the thaw breaks it coincides with the return of the family's ward, Sergei Mihailych, a neighbour and friend of the deceased father, who exhorts Masha to resume life-improving habits. His presence, synonymous with parental influence, is immediately felt: 'in five minutes he had ceased to be a guest and to all of us had become a member of the family' (*FH* p.15). The overture made by Sergei to the 'all of us' which constitutes Masha's family, inclusive of servants, is significant; as is his role in awakening the daughter's memory of her dead father. Thus Masha wistfully observes: 'his stories made me see my father as a simple, lovable person, whom I had never known till then' (*FH* p.17). Like the arrival of Charles Grandet at the beginning of *Eugénie Grandet,* and the appearance of Monsieur Paul in the first book of *Villette*, Sergei's entrance awakens the heroine from a hysterical dormancy. In response to Sergei's initiatives the

heroine dissolves layers of psychical defence to uncover unconscious links which seek a new object: on, of course, the hysterical model of attachment to an initially favoured and revered love object.

Even on his first visit Sergei is quick to establish Masha's identity with her father: 'It's not for nothing you're so like your father. There's *something* in you...' (*FH* p.18). Sergei's interest in Masha is penetrating from the outset: the heroine at once notices the way 'his eyes had a special way of looking at one, direct to begin with and then more and more intent and rather sad' (*FH* p.18). This 'special way of looking' becomes integral to their relationship. It promotes a courtship which satisfies a pedagogic aim through - at odd moments - hypnotic means. Mid-way through her courtship Masha displays a personality not her own, in conformity with a model projectively instilled by a paternal lover. Sergei's dogged refusal to declare love for the heroine is paraded as an emotional maturity that is superior to romantic sentiment. The educative thrust of this courtship is plain from outset: Sergei withholds his love until Masha attains a moral excellence which spurns those pleasures he considers 'trivial'. Worldly pursuits, characterized by selfishness and transience, are set against the moral happiness that rewards stable ties uniting conscience, self, and world. In Sergei's opinion social values bear a discordant relation to domestic values, while the workings of desire clash with a reverential accord with the beloved. The selfless love which Sergei promotes is encapsulated in an implicitly hysterical appeal Tolstoy himself made to a lover of the period: 'it's impossible to love for one's own pleasure, rather one loves for the pleasure of another'.[20]

A melancholic withdrawal from pleasure lies behind Sergei's demand that Masha, by giving up a desiring relation to herself, should compensate for his own renunciation of narcissism. Sergei Mihailovich, who comfortably enjoins: 'I could spend my whole life sitting here on this verandah', instructs Masha in those means by which her beauty, and its provocation of desire, might best be muted (*FH* p.22). Even so, his stray remarks on Masha's appearance are confused: arriving unannounced after Masha's swim he jokes, 'you look exactly like a peasant-girl'; while Masha elsewhere recalls the way in which 'he treated me like a boy whose companionship he liked' (*FH* p.20; p.24). Peasant-girl and young boy, however companionable, present no immediate threat; only a sexuality which implicates Sergei as an equal does this, and it is this which he initially defends against. Beneath Sergei's urgings that Masha should persist in civilizing pursuits lies a fear that not to do so, and instead to submit heedlessly to personal desires, is to forego the

promise of selfless happiness that issues from a pastoral love. Through his influence Sergei seeks to project a paternal ideal on to his beloved so that, in her embodiment of it, she may secure its safe-keeping.

Apart from the moral influence Sergei displays toward his ward, his personal reserve is a further enticement: 'in spite of his constant effort to play down to me I was conscious that behind the part of him which I could understand there remained a whole other world into which he considered my inclusion unnecessary, and this did more than anything to foster my respect and attract me to him' (*FH* p.24). This suppressed and seductive 'other world' relates to the 'something' which first drew Masha to Sergei, and vice versa, through the paternal trait of the eyes. Despite Sergei's diffidence, the sentiments which ground his reserve are unflinchingly perceived by their object. Further Masha realizes that her own desire to please Sergei is a kind of a deception, for it makes her appear to him 'unaffected' when this, for an inexperienced girl, is itself affectation. Quick to note the yield of such strategies, she admits that: 'in deceiving him I became a better person myself' (*FH* p.25). This deceit of the other, an effect of the loved object's identity with the lover's ideal, induces a hysterical courtship; hence Masha notices that: 'when he looked into my eyes and asked a question his very look would draw out of me the answer he wanted' (*FH* p.26). This hysterical relation, in which provocation of the loved one's pleasure is prime stimulus for one's own thoughts and acts, soon binds the lovers more firmly than could romance alone. What clinches their courtship is less Masha's adherence to Sergei's ideal that all happiness lies in living for others, than the shared recognition of the 'awe' which unites them. Masha observes that: 'he was no longer the fond old uncle who spoiled or lectured me: here was my equal, a man who loved and was in awe of me as I loved and was in awe of him' (*FH* p.32). This sharing of ideals sets up a spontaneous reserve between the lovers, a reserve which is unaffected by their mutual displays of love. Seemingly this reserve, deriving from the realm of conscience, creates a liaison more binding than could the play of libidinal impulse alone.

The romantic drama of possession which underlies *Family Happiness* steps up after Masha's first communion service, when the heroine's contact with the divine creates an interior space beyond Sergei's reach, a dimension to which he is respectfully drawn. Sergei seeks to fill this hollow with an ideal goodness; the same space which, sown with conventional feminine virtues, will later becomes a bed for depression. Once the fiancé's ideal is endorsed by Masha's communion with God, the only barrier to proposal is Sergei's attachment to a paternal role. When the heroine spies on and overhears her lover in the orchard muttering 'Masha!' followed by 'Dear,

dear Masha!', she senses that declaration is imminent: 'I knew that from that day he was mine, and that I should not lose him now' (*FH* p.32; p.38). The amorous suspense reaches its climax when Masha attains idealistic heights such that the face of love and death, of good and evil, are reflected in each other: 'I was so happy, and everybody, myself too, seemed so full of wickedness, and yet I felt so kindly disposed to myself and all the world that the thought of death came to me like a dream of bliss' (*FH* pp.41-42). A providence in which domestic aims, self-sacrifice, and mutual love combine, thus sanctions the lovers' courtship. Blessed with oracular vision on her eighteenth birthday, Masha is lifted from the position of canny child to that of high priestess, replete with powers to foretell her future as a reworking of a nostalgic past:

> How I knew, I cannot explain to this moment; but on that memorable day it seemed to me that I knew everything: whatever had been and whatever would be. It was like a blissful dream where all that happens seems to have happened already and to be quite familiar, and it will all happen over again, and one knows that it will happen. (*FH* p.43)

Caught in the wishful exuberance of romantic love, Masha is suddenly able to direct her own fantasy, in which 'to know everything' is to plumb knowledge of an implicitly incestuous kind.

When Masha initiates a *tête à tête* on the verandah to seal their courtship, Sergei is at first loath to exchange his role of paternal *manqué* for that of lover. Holding fast to speculation, Sergei invokes two scenarios involving a 'Monsieur A and Mademoiselle B', in the second of which Monsieur A 'grew to love [Mademoiselle B] as a daughter, and had no fear of loving her in any other way' (*FH* p.45). Rejecting both scenarios, Masha posits a third in which Monsieur A admits to a love that, despite his own recoil from it, is reciprocated by Mademoiselle B. Speculation is swept aside to allow for marriage in haste: two weeks after the lover's conversation on the verandah, 'Monsieur A and Mademoiselle B' are united formally as 'one'. When, in a fit of doubt, Masha begs Sergei to explain why he loves her he replies: 'I don't know, but I love you', all the while staring at her 'with his intent, magnetic gaze'. Masha records the impact of this look:

> I made no reply, and involuntarily looked into his eyes. Suddenly a strange thing happened to me: first I ceased to see what was around me; then his face disappeared, until only his eyes seemed to be shining immediately in front of mine; next I felt that the eyes were inside me, everything became blurred, I could see nothing and was forced to shut my eyes in order to tear myself free from the sensation of rapture and awe which that gaze of his was producing in me... (*FH* p.51)

Such a graphic and sexualized internalization of 'the eyes', evoked here by a final ellipsis, indicates the projection of a paternal ideal into the beloved; indeed it is striking for being communicated at the end of an otherwise lyrical courtship. The dizziness Masha suffers is an effect of achieving a perceptual identity, an experience of *déjà vu* which is less a recollection - implying a temporal distance from the content of the memory trace - than a pleasure experienced

on the model of an originary pleasure. No acknowledgement of a resemblance between Masha's father and Sergei occurs; instead this recognition remains unconscious, bound up with memory traces of satisfactions in which the father is the important object. These memories, through repression, are withheld from the narrator's consciousness; hence the 'rapture and awe' they incite.

Masha's enthralment to her lover's gaze intensifies during the service that commemorates her father: simultaneous with the narrator's hallucination that her father's approving presence is alongside, Sergei turns to her to confess: 'Once he said to me jokingly: 'You should marry my Masha" (*FH* p.53). The memorial service for the father, a prelude to the daughter's marriage, provokes a further admission from Sergei. Intoxicated by a sudden memory of kissing Masha as a child, he declares, his eyes never leaving hers: 'I used to kiss those eyes then, and loved them because they were like his: I never dreamed they would be so dear to me for their own sake' (*FH* p.53). While Sergei declares Masha 'entirely mine', the bride notes the way his 'serene, happy eyes that held me captive rested on me' (*FH* p.53). Saddened by her failure to experience a revelation of union, Masha finds herself in an ambiguous state of apprehension in the waiting carriage: 'I began to feel hot, my eyes sought his in the half-darkness, and all at once I knew that I was not afraid of him, that my fear was love - a new kind of love, tenderer and stronger than the old love. I felt that I was wholly his, and that I was happy in his power over me' (*FH* p.55). Throughout this sequence a hysterical desire for union with the father, such that the daughter is given over to him entire, becomes explicit in uncanny coincidences of thought, speech, look, and touch. It seems that in identifying with the heroine's desire to wed the father, the author too becomes prey to its dizzying consequences. A sudden density of prose signals this: a memorial service for the dead - yet evidently not dead enough - father, rehearses the matrimony of the daughter; likewise Masha's moist awakening in the carriage, a sign of sexual possession, ends the nuptials and the chapter in a spirit of penultimate excitement. Masha's willing capture appears to involve the satisfaction of a phallic promise. When in the Oedipal scenario this promise is made to the girl - in this case to the betrothed Masha - the father's offer of pleasure is one that should provoke castration. The girl's refusal of the knowledge contained in castration - that the subject is without that which fulfils phallic promise - is linked to the hysterical wish for conception by the father. Rather than transferring thwarted desires on to appropriate objects for realizing pleasures in the external world, the hysterical daughter maintains what is denied her - phallic eminence - through allegiance to a father who figures it for her. A mutual deceit reigns to the degree that these wishes - on the side of the father and on the side of the girl - remain unconscious. Thus what seems

shocking about Tolstoy's tale is that it got as far as proof stage before its author recognized just what underpinned it; and that it was readily accepted by the reading public, such that Aylmer Maude could claim it 'the most finished novel [Tolstoy] produced and the one which by its construction came nearest to an ordinary English novel'.[21]

In the second part of *Family Happiness* the locus shifts from Masha's to Sergei's family home. Although Sergei ostensibly gives up his bachelor existence he yet retains his ties to his mother and to his estate: marriage is for him a cherished vision, an imaginative extension of prior traditions; one which, before meeting Masha, he had all but given up hope of fulfilling. Contrastively, Masha relinquishes girlhood status and takes up residence in a foreign house which 'went like clockwork', as directed by the invisible hand of her mother-in-law. Sergei, who is from this point in the text referred to as 'my husband', responds to the generational changes that accompanies his marriage with jocularity; when Masha serves tea from the samovar for gathered family her husband declares, 'Splendid, splendid' and 'Quite grown up!' (*FH* p.60). Sergei's divided loyalties are caricatured on a daily basis: 'every day without fail my husband would offer his arm to his mother, to take her in to dinner as he had always done, but she insisted that he should give me the other arm, so that every day without fail we stuck in the doorway and got in each other's way' (*FH* p.59). Sergei establishes himself as patriarch without diminishing his emotional ties with his mother. Not so Masha: as a cyclical return to her former winter of discontent becomes explicit in the narrative, repetition quickly supersedes novelty. Historical time is telescoped through swiftly passing seasons, objects become strange through being observed at close quarters and, above all, Masha finds herself trapped in a plot of another's making. Stasis rules: 'I began to feel lonely, feel that life was repeating itself, and that neither of us had anything new to give, and that we seemed to be forever turning in our old tracks' (*FH* p.61). Finding herself in a spiral inverse to that of her earlier ecstasies, Masha realizes that happiness without excitement is for her no happiness at all: 'Loving was not enough for me after the happiness I had known in falling in love' (*FH* p.62). Gone is the joyous fulfilment of the other's desire as of one's own; instead Masha fluctuates, to her husband's alarm, between fits of depression and 'transports of violent affection' (*FH* p.62). Whereas Sergei's passionate outbursts are characterized as bursts of 'wild delight', similar swings of mood in Masha are viewed as evidence of 'violent affection'. No longer contented with her status as the cause of her husband's desire, Masha suffers the constraints of monogamous virtue keenly, sensing that 'every day that passed riveted another link to the chain of habit which was binding our life into a fixed shape' (FH p.62). This depression of the heroine's desire has lasting impact: 'My state of mind affected my health, and I began to suffer

from nerves' (*FH* p.63). In exhausting the romantic ideal which, through the support of fantasy, had until then sustained her, the heroine's moods begin to tamper with organic rhythms, so that within the narrative a seasonal harmony is replaced by an indefatigable clockwork.

What Masha first experienced as romantic excess becomes manifest, transposed to the nervous system, as depression. The determining effects of Masha's marital choice slows her movements to the point of lethargy: the excitement which derives from forbidden satisfactions palls in the interests of moral autonomy, a situation which provokes the heroine's frustration and after a certain period, depression. Masha's discontent stems from her loss of the canny knowingness she enjoyed in courtship, which had enabled her to shape circumstances to her own ends. Depression breaks through when Masha realizes that she doesn't know how to renew the imaginative experiences of satisfaction which the prospect of marriage to Sergei had awakened in her. In the early months of Masha's life with Sergei anxious expectation comes to take the place of glad anticipation, such that a melancholy element, through which the subject seeks confirmation of being without that which it desires, enters the narrative. The condition of nerves which Masha suffers is a metaphor for her inability to express what is going on within her. For the heroine to suffer from nerves is to experience a passivity which denies agency to her own actions. From now on Masha 'knows yet doesn't know' what her position within the narrative is.

This shift from a precocious canniness to hysterical ignorance can be explained in psychoanalytic terms in relation to the first topography of the psyche which proposes unconscious, preconscious and conscious spheres. The heroine's apparent passivity in Tolstoy's novella may be traced to the innervation of unconscious thing-presentations, which cut off from their expression in language, instead wrack her body.[22] Masha's capacity to narrate her tale is in effect pock-marked by holes which show where words might otherwise belong. Rather than being expressed directly this shift in the heroine's mood, from happiness to melancholy, is demonstrated in the couple's relations to each other; specifically in what Masha and Sergei can afford to know of each other and, by extension, of themselves:

> When we were by ourselves - which we seldom were - I felt neither joy nor excitement nor embarrassment in his company: it seemed like being alone. I knew very well that this was my husband and not some stranger but a good man - my husband, whom I knew as well as I knew myself. I was certain that I knew everything he would do or say, and how he would look; and if anything he did surprised me I decided that he had done it by mistake. I expected nothing from him. In a word, he was my husband - and that was all. It seemed to me that this was as it should be, that it could never be and had never been otherwise. (*FH* p.79).

The man Masha recognizes as her husband has changed since their courtship; although the

outward man is the same the feelings with which Masha identifies him have altered. The strained familiarity Masha experiences in Sergei's company is the same strained familiarity she reveals, and then covers over again, in herself: 'I had no leisure for reflection and the regrets that these dimly-felt changes caused me I tried to forget in the distractions with which I was always surrounded' (*FH* p.79). Unlike the severely disturbed psychotic, who abandons unconscious object-cathexes and withdraws the libido deriving from them back into the ego, the hysteric, however consciously she withdraws from the loved and hated object in the external world, never lets links to repressed object-cathexes lapse. Crucially, however tense Masha's marital relations with Sergei become she remains capable of transference on to him, of projecting wishes on to a husband who resembles an irreplaceable unconscious model.

Acting in accordance with the physician's advice in *Anna Karenina*, when a European holiday is prescribed as a rest-cure for Kitty Shcherbatsky, Sergei escorts his wilting wife to the bright lights of Petersburg. There she revives, rejuvenated by the alchemical powers of vanity. Received into society to broad and fervent acclaim, Masha's desires are rapturously sated: 'At the ball it seemed to me more than ever that I was the centre around which everything revolved, that it was only for my sake that the great ball-room was lighted up, and the band was playing and this admiring crowd of people had assembled' (*FH* p.69). Thrilled by new opportunities to prove her love by the 'sacrifice' of her desires, Masha is struck by Sergei's incipient signs jealousy. This jealousy is complex; foremost Sergei is appalled to watch the ruin of an ideal he himself erected, so that his forced indifference to Masha's triumphs is a measure of the esteem in which he formerly held her. Masha's fall is caused by her narcissistic embrace of society and its vain attractions. Thus a promiscuous desire to be loved by society at large supplants the creditable wish to be loved singularly, selflessly, monogamously. In love with a love which waives relational ties, Masha shatters the ideal she once incarnated. Instead a facility to inspire love in others and to maintain an upper hand in the game of love characterizes Masha in the Petersburg period. The naive narrator, remarking on her changed relations to her husband, admits: 'I was so blinded by the spontaneous affection which I apparently inspired from all around me, so dazed by the unfamiliar atmosphere of luxury and enjoyment; it was so agreeable to find myself in this new world not merely his equal but his superior' (*FH* p.70).

Rather than the 'clock-work' rhythm of early marriage, whole seasons begin to slip by without incident - apart from the birth of Masha's baby and Sergei's mother's death, neither of which penetrate the screen of courtesy which divides the couple. Although tenderness for the child is

expressive in Tolstoy's narratives of maternity, it is primarily an index of the ability to love beyond the self. Flouting selflessness, Masha leaves her infant to a nurse and to the maternal solicitude of her husband, and enters the society of a renowned European watering-place. There she is drawn to an Italian marquis, specifically to those qualities lacking to and yet reminiscent of Sergei. Masha notes that the marquis: 'was young, handsome, elegant, and, above all, in his smile and the shape of his forehead he resembled my husband, but he was far better-looking' (*FH* p.81). The marquis awakens in Masha conflictual impulses: 'I did not acknowledge it to myself but I was afraid of this man, and against my will often thought of him' (*FH* p.81). Adultery by imagination takes Masha as much by surprise as her fantasies about Sergei once had done. Tangled in a net of guilt and suspense, the heroine encounters a sexual intensity that borders on violence: 'I hated, I feared him, he was utterly repugnant and alien to me; and yet at that moment the excitement and passion of this odious stranger raised a powerful echo in my own heart' (*FH* p.85).[23] The sobre effect of this brief lapse - 'the shame of that kiss burned my cheek' - signals the beginning of moral awareness in Masha. From that moment what was previously experienced as shame and resentment is absorbed at the level of guilt, thus Masha repents rather than hysterically suffers her desires. Returning to her husband by train, a form of travel Tolstoy favours for its parallel with the workings of consciousness, Masha observes 'a new light, [which] lay like a reproach on my conscience' (*FH* p.86). No longer prey to the vagaries of desire, Masha has taken hold of a sturdier tool with which to direct her actions; the morality of mature - and implicitly censorious - love.

Despite Masha's resolutions it is only with a change of season to spring, the arrival of her old nurse and younger sister, and a stay at Masha's home, that an abiding change in her attitude occurs. Masha's disillusion is given free play in her old home, without the distracting effects of depression and nostalgic melancholy to obscure it. Stripped of their romantic sheen, loved and familiar objects from her girlhood fill Masha's senses. Standing in the middle of her old bedroom, in which her children now sleep, she notices that:

> suddenly from every corner, from the walls, from the curtains, old forgotten visions of youth crept out. Old voices began to sing the songs of my girlhood. What had become of those visions now, of those dear, sweet songs? All that I had hardly dared to hope for had materialized. My vague confused dreams had become a reality, and reality had become an oppressive, difficult joyless life. And yet everything here was just the same: the garden I saw from the window, the grass, the path, the very same bench over there at the edge of the dell, the same song of the nightingale by the pond, the same lilac in full flower, and the same moon above the house - and yet all so dreadfully, so desperately changed! (*FH* p.88)

According to the novella's implied authorial conscience Masha's despair, in which 'reality had become an oppressive, difficult joyless life', is to be endured before a higher level of awareness,

prefaced by the heroine's reimmersion in music, reveals itself. Left alone, Masha sits down at the piano, and observes how she had neglected its practice, 'ever since the time of our first visit to Petersburg' (*FH* p.89). Confronting an emptiness within, Masha struggles to articulate a future minus the stimulus of fantasy:

> But there seemed to be only a blank before me, I had no desires and no hopes. 'Can it be that my life is finished?' I pondered, and then, appalled, I raised my head and began to play the same *andante* through again, so as to forget and not to think. (*FH* p.90)

The blank before Masha suggests a future minus the hysterical fulfilment of inciting love in a revered other. This performance of the *Sonate pathéthique*, which awakens old desires in a muted form, implies the view that only selfless passions can displace the narcissism on which all omnipotent fantasies of self - including the hysterical one - lie.

There is no doubt that Tolstoy's response to publishing *Family Happiness* was dramatic, perhaps even traumatic, in the sense of it being greater than the event itself warranted. Being prey to the dizzying effect of wanting to be wanted, and in a sexual way, by the father, is a risky inspiration for narratives which otherwise exemplify pastoral harmony. The theme of being taken by surprise by feelings that both excite and damn the individual who experiences them, never entirely disappears from Tolstoy's voluminous work. Infidelity, less of one's spouse than of one's own capacity for sustained love, proves a continuously disruptive force. More irreconcilable still are hysterical feelings which well up from within, such that one is taken as if from behind by them. It is not surprising that Tolstoy never employed a feminine narrator again, given that in this novella the feminine voice speaks of wishes which border on the incestuous. In so far as *Family Happiness* does end it is to the strains of the *Sonate pathétique*, and on a final note of maternal possession which envelopes mother and child. Impulsively gathering up her swaddled child, Masha repeats 'Mine, mine, mine!' at the same time as she experiences a 'blissful tension in all my limbs' (*FH* p.97). As if to confirm her power in the triad of mother, child, and father, Masha withdraws her baby from her husband's affectionate play, as if to communicate that 'none but I should look at him for long' (*FH* p.97). The child, a son, who one day would appear, as Nicholas Irtenyev once had, 'no bigger than a little boy reflected in the pupil of [his mother's] eye', assumes his place at the beginning of things once more, as sovereign in the eye of the mother (*CBY* p.52). There is, it would seem, no other kind of beginning possible for a boy who would always be, if only in hysterical fantasy, the apple of a maternal eye.

Although Masha's reconciliation with family affections and country life appears complete, such that the heroine learns to tell her tale rather than to suffer it, Tolstoy's novella returns in its

closing pages to deep-flowing currents of the family romance. Although the hysterical excitement of the 'eyes' has abated their command has not softened; equally the mature Masha remains prey to primary affects of longing, loss, and anxiety. *Family Happiness* illustrates an implicit connection between choice of spouse and choice of neurosis, in which the compound effects of a limited object choice and individual constitutional propensities are seen to play a determining role in the psyche. In this novella there is no breakthrough of understanding in which Masha, like Lucy Snowe in her confrontation with Madame Beck, recognizes Sergei's resemblance to a longed-for loved one. At the end of *Family Happiness* Masha knows tragically too much yet pathetically too little to do anything but suffer her fate. For this character the focus for understanding appears to be given not to education but to experience, to a process which issues its revelations 'too late' for their productive absorption. Further Masha's relation to motherhood, with its emphasis on domestic and affective ties, appears to hinder access to social and cultural realms which Freud recommends in "Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness' for their protection against neurosis. Instead the subjugation of the heroine's desires within the frame of marriage acts to shift unresolved psychical conflicts, stemming from the nuclear complex, from the generation of the parents, on to the generation of the husband, and - in a projective displacement - on to that of the child.

When the authorial voice in *Family Happiness* wavers, as it does on several occasions in this novella, nothing gives way: no disaster - as occurs in *Villette* - follows. Unlike Brontë, who in *Villette* gives little hint of what 'the goddess in her chamber' might look like, Tolstoy is bold enough to give the loved object an outline in his narrative and, in so doing, communicates it in a less hallucinatory way. By the time Nicholas Irtenyev has grown from boy to youth he has hold of a firmer distinction between his own - occasionally hysterical - projections on to the world, and the existence of a world beyond himself which receives them. Whereas in *Villette* the distinction between internal and external worlds rests on an experience of alienation which threatens to excludes the heroine from a common world, in *Family Happiness* the heroine's inability to identify the wishful and depressive colourings of the world as her own, is linked to her reluctance to embrace a generality which subsumes her wishes within it. Something altogether explicit is revealed in *Family Happiness* and it is this which causes Tolstoy sharp discomfort. By transferring the narrative voice to a feminine heroine Tolstoy creates all kinds of complications; not so much on the surface level of whether the narrator is to identify with a male or female protagonist, because he can and does do both with success, but more on the emotive level of whose aim the narrator is to identify with: Masha's desire for the father or Sergei's desire for the mother. To do both, as this

narrative illustrates in dramatic moments like the carriage scene and the threesome in the doorway, is to tie the narrator's shoelaces together, at least in terms of narrative intelligibility.

What Tolstoy will do in future works, for which *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth* and *Family Happiness* can be seen as practice pieces, is to expand the creative frame to include more and more characters; and this to offset the collisions that follow from the conflicting identifications these characters make. The benefits in terms of plot are obvious: the first lover who meets Natasha Rostov's eye after she has turned her longing gaze away from her brother Nicholas in *War and Peace*, is a reckless soldier who - like Eugénie's cousin Charles in *Eugénie Grandet* - instantiates her wildest most suppressed dreams; equally when Pierre finally asks a chastened Natasha to marry it is in the spirit of a worldly and devoted fraternity, rather than the transgressive paternity which inflected his earlier feelings for her. The more Tolstoy develops stylistically as a novelist, the more adept he becomes at displacing archaic objects of forbidden love on to objects which can acceptably represent intense and thus fused feelings. This advance meant that feelings could be elaborated without encountering the resistance of the author, who is free to develop sustained analyses of complex individual characters. This kind of control is missing from *Family Happiness*: when Sergei and Masha marry they undertake a psychical drama fuelled by features of themselves over which, because they fall outside the conscious ego, each engages with but cannot master. Thus in Balzac's, Brontë's, and Tolstoy's narratives the phenomenon of mutual attraction can be seen to work like a hysterical nucleus, taking protagonists out of stable psychical arrangements and pitting them against aspects of themselves which find relief in relation to others, and this with the promise of high reward and keen punishment.

NOTES

1. Leo Tolstoy, *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth*, trans. by Rosemary Edmonds (London: Penguin, 1965), p.141. Further references to this edition will be given after quotations in the text as *CBY*.
2. Sarah Kofman, *The Childhood of Art* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1988) p.60.
3. In his 'Recollections', Tolstoy writes: 'My mother I do not at all remember. I was a year-and-a-half old when she died, and by some strange chance no portrait of her has been preserved, so that as an actual physical being I cannot picture her to myself. In a way I am glad of this, for my conception of her is thus purely spiritual and all I know about her is beautiful.' *The Works of Leo Tolstoy* (London: OUP, 1937) vol. 21, p.12.
4. Quoted by Count S. Tolstoy in 'Music in Tolstoy's Life', *Family Views of Tolstoy*, ed. by Aylmer Maude (London: G. Allen & Unwin), pp.134-55, p.135.
5. Tolstoy's definition of music as the 'memory of feelings and of transitions from one feeling to another', is recorded in 'Music in Tolstoy's Life', *Family Views of Tolstoy*, p.135.
6. 30 July 1856, *Tolstoy's Diaries*, trans. by R. F. Christian (London: Athlone, 1985), vol. 1, p.121.
7. In relation to this early period of Tolstoy's writings, Edward Wasiolek observes how Nicholas's 'mind distorts the present by clinging to the past. The past itself becomes a cheating form and, as such, similar to fantasies and imaginings. Nicholas's relentless attention to what is real and his instinct for discerning what is false have led him to find the impulse of distortion in the very faculty of seeing.' *Tolstoy's Major Fiction* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1978), p.24.
8. Sarah Kofman, *The Childhood of Art*, p.62.
9. *Family Happiness*, p.61. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text as *FH*.
10. 20 March 1852, *Tolstoy's Diaries*, vol. I, p.44.
11. 'Recollections', *The Works of Leo Tolstoy*, vol. 21, pp.45-46.
12. This epigraph is missing from English translations, but it is noted by Natasha Kisselef in 'Idyll and Ideal: Aspects of Sentimentalism in Tolstoy's *Family Happiness*', in *Modern Critical Views: Leo Tolstoy*, ed. by Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1986), p.219.
13. The close friend and publisher V. P. Botkin, who launched Tolstoy's literary career, pronounced *Family Happiness* 'admirable, profoundly talented, and meaningful'. In Henri Troyat's *Tolstoy*, trans. by Nancy Amphoux (London: Penguin, 1970), p.269.
14. 4/16 July 1857, *Tolstoy's Diaries*, vol.1, p.139.
15. Renato Poggioli, 'Tolstoy's *Domestic Happiness*', in *Tolstoy's Short Fiction*, ed. by M. Katz (New York: Norton, 1991), pp.399-400.
16. 3 May 1859, *Tolstoy's Letters 1828-79* ed. by R. F. Christian (London: Athlone, 1978), vol. 1, p.127.
17. Victor Terras, *A Handbook of Russian Literature*, p.354.
18. Quoted by Natasha Kisseleff, 'Idyll and Ideal', *Modern Critical Views: Leo Tolstoy*, ed. by Harold Bloom (Yale: Yale University Press, 1986), p.211.
19. Florence Nightingale, 'Cassandra', in *Suggestions for Thought* (London: Pickering & Chatto,

1991), p.208. See Chapter Six for full analysis of Nightingale's text.

20. 9 November 1856, *Tolstoy's Letters*, ed. by R. F. Christian, vol. I, p.74.

21. Aylmer Maude, *The Works of Leo Tolstoy*, vol. 1, p.415.

22. Sigmund Freud, 'The Unconscious' (1918), pp.201-02.

23. The strength of these mixed feelings also find expression in *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth*, in the scene when Nicholas contemplates his violent hatred for St-Jérome, a detestation which conceals an underlying attraction (*CBY* p.151).

CHAPTER FIVE

'Outstretched arms and pleadings made in vain': George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*

Daniel Deronda, unlike *Family Happiness*, is the story of many families, all finally connected. To accommodate the multiple ties these families generate George Eliot uses various formal techniques: narrative depth and complexity is favoured over linear psychological coherence; indirection is fostered as a means of communication more compelling than declaration; and the work of a first-person narrator is given over to an implied narrator who traces rather than controls events. The sober omniscience of Tolstoy's narrator in *Family Happiness,* contrasts with the percipient yet restrained narrator in *Daniel Deronda* who, while no less morally responsive to the unravelling story, is notably less knowing and constant. Whereas Tolstoy's tale evokes a lost time, punctuated by the passage of hysterical innocence into melancholy experience, *Daniel Deronda* pushes toward an unknown future in which underlying impulses and fantasies threaten to upset the narrative present. Pre-eminently a psychological novel, *Daniel Deronda* employs images less as symbolic metaphors than as psychical prompts; confounding a progressive understanding of the events it represents, the text will suddenly push back, to images attached to phobia or to the edge of secrets, before thrusting forward to a vision of damnation or predestination. 'It is the trick of thinking to be either premature or behindhand': such is the logic which, accorded by the narrator, stamps this narrative.[1] *Daniel Deronda* does more than elaborate a hysterical structure; it is a sign of Eliot's ambition that she integrates historical, religious, and social themes alongside psychological ones. Although the central themes focus on, and can only be made sense of by, the protagonists Gwendolen Harleth and Daniel Deronda, the English social context in which their relation unfolds works to complement and explain the significance of each.

A density of characterization, in which society can be seen to imprint itself on the individual within it, is an important feature of Eliot's work. In a letter to Frederick Harrison in 1879, Eliot wrote:

> It is melancholy enough that to most of our polite readers the Social Factor in Psychology would be a dull subject. For it is certainly no conceit of [myself and G. H. Lewes] which announces it to be a supremely interesting element in the thinking of our time.2

This 'Social Factor' is essential to the characterization of Gwendolen Harleth and Daniel Deronda,

which displays a greater scope and depth than that which is achieved by other authors in this study. All these factors have direct bearing on the presentation of hysteria in *Daniel Deronda*, a novel in which the hysterical heroine has the status of a character and not a narrating subject: Gwendolen Harleth never employs the naked 'I' that creates divisive narrative tensions in *Family Happiness* and *Villette*. And yet a significant rift, deriving from a different source, underlies *Daniel Deronda*. In 1874, the year *Daniel Deronda* appeared in serial, Eliot suggested that her commitment to imaginative writing was to a 'set of experiments in life - an endeavour to see what our thought and emotion may be capable of - what stories of motive, actual or hinted as possible, give promise of a better after which we may strive, what gains from past revelations and discipline we must strive to keep hold of as something more sure than shifting theory'.[3] In undertaking these experiments Eliot yet disregards the requirements of an empirical science that dominated the times, and allows a powerful moral element to qualify the impartiality of her project. This is flagged by the novel's epigraph, which runs:

> Let thy chief terror be of thine own soul:
> There, 'mid the throng of hurrying desires
> That trample o'er the dead to seize their spoil,
> Lurks vengeance, footless, irresistible
> As exhalations laden with slow death,
> And o'er the fairest troop of captured joys
> Breathes pallid pestilence.

Thus two opposing currents converge in *Daniel Deronda*: the slow unfolding of a psychological experiment which traces out subtle organic relations of individual characters in a given social milieu, and a pervasive and less regulated drive to challenge the integrity of these same characters through an imposition of conscience and remorse. And it is the tension produced by these divergent aims which enlivens the protagonists, chiefly Gwendolen Harleth and Daniel Deronda, through whom the narrative courses.

It would be erroneous to say that in *Daniel Deronda* George Eliot apprehends the hysterical character in the third person in order not to implicate herself in its neurotic structure. Eliot's position as an author is altogether more complicated: not only was the intellectual context in which she participated as editor, critic, and author one of ferment, but her position as a woman during this period created complex demands. Of all the authors in this study, Eliot was the most influenced by current debates in psychology, philosophy, and the human sciences: this author was a critic long before she became a novelist. These debates, which formed a vital component of her narrative intentions, inspired meditations on character, environment, and heredity - giving

depth to characters such as Mr Featherstone and Mr Bulstrode in *Middlemarch*. For Feuerbach, whose study *The Essence of Christianity* Marian Evans translated in 1853, the idea that consciousness is reflexive is fundamental to the workings of the psyche; what can be known of oneself and the world depends on a willingness to view both oneself and others as objects:

> in the object which he contemplates, therefore, man becomes acquainted with himself; consciousness of the objective is the self-consciousness of man. We know the man by the object, by his conception of what is external to himself; in it his nature becomes evident; this object is his manifested nature, his true objective *ego*.4

This otherness is exemplified in Marian Evans's adoption of a *nom de plume* which, apart from effacing feminine gender, offers a springboard for observing the self. Hence she confides to a friend that 'removed to a distance from myself [...] I can take myself by the ears and inspect myself, like any other queer monster on a small scale'.[5] Not every character that Eliot holds up in the third person in *Daniel Deronda* comes over as a 'queer monster': some are decidedly queerer than others. Such queerness is undoubtedly a feature of Gwendolen Harleth, as it is to a lesser degree of Daniel Deronda. Eliot's description of herself as a 'queer monster' is an eminently psychological rather than an empirical claim, and it reflects how perception may distort what it sees - which is precisely what occurs in Tolstoy's narratives when the ordinary world appears, to the protagonist, suddenly strange.

Eliot's dispute with the social determinism and evolutionary theory of the period is that they operate with a linear and causal account of mental process, and do not account for the diffuse ways that experience makes its impress on the psyche.[6] When Eliot presents the workings of hysteria in *Daniel Deronda,* her emphasis lies not only in the psychological phenomena which characterize the two protagonists, but in the progress of these phenomena in all those characters who display hysterical features. As a dynamic feature of the narrative, these traits illuminate the hesitations, wishes, and withdrawals which represent hysteria at the level of thought - whether or not these thoughts are externally realized. In *Daniel Deronda* the author's concentration on perception and memory is prominent: ideas from the past are seen to persist in the operations of memory, while desiring impulses, to the degree they evade the channels of inhibitory thought, have the potential to disrupt - on occasion - the organization of the psyche. In this novel a tension between the wishes, fantasy, and hysterically 'uncontrolled reading' of Gwendolen contrasts decisively with the supervisory role of Deronda, whose influence reflects the civilizing virtues of human sympathy, cultural values, and spiritual contemplation.

Eliot presents individual characters in *Daniel Deronda* as a synthesis of memory, experience, and fantasy; all elements which, invisible to the eye, escape the empirical models of psychological research of the late nineteenth century. The inference that human actions are the direct product of a presiding autonomous ego is put into question by this author, and the idea that the will - or 'volitional stimulation' - derives from sources other than the ego is posed.[7] In Eliot's final novel Deronda is swayed by desires of which he has only a faint inkling, that confound rational will, while Gwendolen is infused by excitements and dreads which she experiences yet fails to comprehend. Undercurrents such as these are an increasing feature of Eliot's narratives: as the narrator of *Middlemarch* observes, 'we are all of us imaginative in some form or other, for images are the brood of desire'.[8] Far from invoking the ego as a charioteer behind the chariot consciousness, as Plato depicts in the *Phaedrus*, in *Daniel Deronda* Eliot puts forward an ego, at least in initial stages, touched by images and impulses that thwart its ascendancy. In 'Leaves from a Notebook', a series of thoughts on the creative process, Eliot reflects on the effect of the image once it has been linked with sensation. In these writings she explains how:

> the modes of telling a story founded on these processes of outward mastery and inward life derive their effectiveness from the superior mastery of images and pictures in grasping the attention - or, one might say with more fundamental accuracy, from the fact that our earliest, strongest impressions, our most intimate convictions, are simply images added to more or less of sensation. These are the primitive instruments of thought.[9]

In the beginning, Eliot proposes, our thoughts were images. And it is in reverting to the controlling power of images that this author would have its heroine ineluctably caught, activating her from within by perceptions which return to her - projectively - from without. The wealth of images that propel Eliot's characters into action are not however spread evenly; for whereas Deronda is depicted as a strongly susceptible youth with a tendency to identify with the fears of others, often feminine ones, Gwendolen figures as the victim of swiftly altering moods and of an overwhelming dislike of open spaces and darkness.

The headstrong power of subterranean impulse is attributed to both hero and heroine in *Daniel Deronda*, though its distribution is neither unselective nor equal. As a boy of eleven, Deronda is taken by an enthusiasm for the wilful construction of stories, excited by a newfound capacity to link ideas to early images. In the grip of novel and unwelcome knowledge regarding own legitimacy and inheritance, the boy experiences a sudden rush of thought activity. The narrator explains how: 'the impetuous advent of new images took possession of him with the force of fact for the first time told, and left him no immediate power for the reflection that he might be

trembling over a fiction of his own' (*DD* p.206). Gwendolen likewise shares a precocious tendency to entertain the psyche's 'most primitive instruments of thought', although in the heroine this urge prolongs itself into early adulthood. Even upon maturity, 'fantasies moved within her like ghosts, making no break with her more acknowledged consciousness and finding no obstruction in it: dark rays doing their work invisibly in the broad light' (*DD* p.669). In both characters the effect of linking impulses to images is dramatic; yet the passive acceptance displayed by Deronda as he moves toward a revelation of ancestry, directly contrasts with the anxious awakening of consciousness in Gwendolen. Whereas the hero seems directed by an internal necessity, Gwendolen seems driven by an exigent fate. This contrast is borne out in the benignity of Deronda's odyssey compared with the malignity of Gwendolen's spiritual descent; like two parallel lines that track and never meet, these characters evoke the imagery of Dante's visionary quest. The complementarity of Deronda and Gwendolen, like that of Lydgate and Dorothea in *Middlemarch* before them, cannot be overemphasized. From the novel's opening at the gaming tables in Leubronn, Gwendolen, the object of Deronda's equivocal contemplation, is regarded as a bearer of images associated with excitement and disturbance; and Deronda's observation implies that as bearer of such images Gwendolen must be restrained before this unruly stimulus may cease. The pressure on the psyche which results from the linking of impulse and image is different in each protagonist: whereas Deronda's response to new knowledge is a heightening of awareness, Gwendolen reacts to incoming stimuli as to a threat, one which brings with it anxiety and a narrowing of the perceptual field.

While Deronda accedes to a prominence synonymous with understanding and sympathy, Gwendolen is constrained by an egoistic finitude such that enlightenment, when it finally arrives, exacts a high price. Deronda is blessed with a symbolic faith, exemplified in his assumption of Judaism; in contrast, Gwendolen aspires vainly to a favour and privilege which discounts the claims of others. In *Daniel Deronda* the imagery of salvation is vivid; the narrator warns that 'we are all of us denying or fulfilling prayers - and men in their careless deeds walk amidst invisible outstretched arms and pleadings made in vain' (Ch23, I, p.434). These outstretched arms are attributed to Gwendolen and to the painted screen inside the cabinet which signifies her phobic fears in hysterical moments, a coincidence which may suggest their identity. The imagery of grasping hands and outstretched arms also haunts Deronda for the duration of a mission which slowly reveals itself as the overcoming of personal demands in accord with an overarching humanity. It is in coming to terms with the symbolic and family prohibitions which trouble Gwendolen, Leonora, and Mirah that Deronda is freed to formulate and fulfil his ultimate aim.

Deronda's quest for deliverance beyond the self is explicit in Feuerbach religious writings: 'the yearning of man after something above himself is nothing else than the longing after the perfect type of his nature, the yearning to be free from himself, i.e. from the limits and defects of his individuality'.[10] One can only be free of oneself, according to Feuerbach's and latterly Eliot's conceptualization, by identifying and understanding oneself as if another. Ultimately, it is in knowing himself as if he had been one of those women he deems forsaken, that Deronda liberates his role as symbolic redeemer. The attribute 'forsaken', as applied to the three women whose lives Deronda intimately touches, itself bears on a hysterical complex. For what the narrative suggests is that it is by sacrificing his links to the women he is most intimate with that Deronda accedes to a position which, subsuming affective ties in a spiritual brotherhood, releases him from emotional and implicitly sexual bonds. Finally it is by forsaking others, in becoming deaf to the siren calls with which particular women captivate him, that Deronda achieves a higher plane of sympathy and knowledge.

It is not surprising that George Eliot's final novel should have had the critical impact it did, considering how sharply it addressed issues of identity, duty, race, conversion, and fulfilment. There is no doubt that Eliot's participation in intellectual issues of the day, which included evolutionary theory, psychological determinism, and theological revisionism, meant that she was well-placed to articulate dense human questions in a literary mode. Yet a further feature, less immediately topical, might also explain the wide appeal *Daniel Deronda* held for its readers. Freud, we know from his biographer Ernest Jones, found *Middlemarch* 'appealing'; in particular, *Daniel Deronda* struck him as 'amazing', for its portrayal of those 'intimate ways' of Judaism 'which we speak of only among ourselves'.[11] In a very different vein, Henry James was so taken by what he considered the novel's flaws, that he sat down to write a corrective which appeared as *The Portrait of a Lady*; while in this century F. R. Leavis famously advised that the Jewish sections should be excised and renamed in the feminine as *Gwendolen Harleth*. Although the immediate force of *Daniel Deronda* lies in its representation of lively intellectual issues, a considerable pull is assignable to its focus on intimate - and potentially hysterical - relations, to the space between individuals which stimulates consciousness. The intimate space which springs up between Deronda and Gwendolen can be seen to unfold as a narrative, as a story enlivened by conscious and unconscious traits of both characters. Although their initial meeting is an effect of chance, their impact on each other can be seen as continuous and, on a psychical level, necessary. These two characters unwittingly use each other, unwittingly, through the projective influence they

exert, one upon the other; an influence which becomes manifest in the conversational exchanges their growing intimacy allows. Within the narrative both characters spend as much time - possibly more - speculating about each other as they do in actual conversation; and it is these internal monologues which, in spurring thoughts into consciousness, importantly shape the character and actions of Gwendolen and Deronda.

Pierre Janet (1859-1947), a younger French contemporary of George Eliot's, based his therapeutic work with hysterical patients on the dynamic processes of intimate relations; valuing these processes above all other forms of treatment for their potential to transform the individual psyche.

> Men have come to attach great value to the individual, to the penetration of the individual, to the conquest of the individual; they have invented *intimacy*, that is to say special relationships determined by the peculiar characteristics of two people in association, 'because it was he, because it was I'; and these delicate and perfected relationships are among the most potent stimulants which society can offer us.12

It is the strength of such 'potent stimulants' that Eliot illuminates in the acts of intimacy which are a recurring structural feature of *Daniel Deronda*: pre-eminently between Gwendolen and Deronda, and also between Mordecai and Deronda. Janet describes the process of psychological treatment in which one person puts his or her self in the hands of another, in order to transform it for the better, as an 'act of adoption'. Once this artificial relation has been set up between the two individuals, nominated by Janet as director and patient, the dynamic it initiates comes to frame and elicit powerful psychical responses of a kind that are unachievable in family or social relations:

> It is precisely because the director is artificial, because he makes things go easily, because he himself effects three-quarters of the journey, that the patient can succeed in making in relation to the director the act of adoption which he has never before succeeded in making in relation to anyone else.13

Such a director is distinct from Freud's passively attentive therapist: in Janet's therapy the director encourages the patient to exploit a relation which is both contrived and exaggerated. Through this contrivance the patient is able to absorb the influence of the director as an active agent within his or her own psyche. This is a special kind of influence, which instead of working upon the patient's psyche as an outside force operates as an agent within the psyche, and is intensified by the frequency of sessions and the growing influence of the director.[14]

Gwendolen's relation to Deronda may be understood in Janet's terms of adoption and influence. It is because Gwendolen's relation to Deronda, and similarly Deronda's relation to Mordecai, is the result of a chance meeting, an effect of plot and not of kinship, that an act of adoption in which the self passes under the guidance of another, is effected. Gwendolen is

attracted to Deronda, and vice versa, because they don't know each other in a conventional sense; a proviso which means that their knowledge of each other is the sum of their dynamic relations, both conscious and unconscious, projectively extending from the present, into the past and future. 'What was the secret of form or expression which gave the dynamic quality to her glance?', such is the query which, animating Deronda's first curious regard for Gwendolen, opens the novel (*DD* p.35). Within the therapeutic context proposed by Janet, the idea one member of the couple forms of the other is created projectively; it is an effect of intimacy. Janet specifies that this form of perception is enhanced by the peculiar influence of the director: it is 'expressed satisfactorily by the idea that the patient forms of his director, for the ideas we have of a person are nothing other than a greatly abridged summary of our behaviour towards that person'.[14] Thus Deronda and Gwendolen find out what they themselves are like through the behaviour they elicit in each other.

Another facet of this influence is the quality of the communication exchanged by the couple. In his research on the effects of suggestion on the individual psyche, Hyppolyte Bernheim (1840-1914), a psychologist from Nancy, insists that: 'the word alone is not sufficient to cure. The word must be suggestive; that is, it must make an impression and be accepted without mistrust or counter-suggestion'.[15] These ideas, highlighted by Janet and Bernheim to explain the powers inhering in psychical relations that exhibit a hysterical potential, inform the narrative of *Daniel Deronda*. It is as a result of this dynamism within intimacy that Janet's 'potent stimulants' find their way into Deronda and Gwendolen, in such a way that a psychical transformation - implicating them both - occurs. One important difference between Janet's 'act of adoption' and Eliot's narrative of transformation, is that in the novel both members of the couple undergo a psychical change, a change which is all the more striking given a parity in age between Gwendolen and Deronda:

> Without the aid of sacred ceremony or costume, [Gwendolen's] feelings had turned this man, only a few years older than herself, into a priest; a sort of reverence for one who is also young is the most coercive of all: there is the same level of temptation, and the higher motive is believed in as a fuller force - not suspected to be a mere residue from weary experience. (*DD* p.485)

The one who would instruct is, through the other's bestowal of trust, educated by so doing. This is an education of a special sort: neither moral nor purposive, its aim is to effect a psychical change in both members of the couple. Its impact is traceable neither to the wisdom that is a direct effect of age and knowledge, nor to an empathy based on shared understanding, but rather to a psychical tolerance which allows the dependent member of the couple to comprehend otherwise incompatible ideas, while the 'depended upon' member absorbs and reflects back their significance.

When Deronda first observes Gwendolen gaming in the opening scene of the novel *Daniel Deronda*, his gaze is as 'bedizened' in his perception of the heroine, as Gwendolen's reaction to it is heightened in her flush of shame. Already there is evidence for Deronda's opinion that, 'generally in all deep affections the objects are a mixture - half persons and half ideas - sentiments and affections flow in together' (*DD* pp.470-71). Gwendolen - half person and half idea - is from the beginning an object which elicits strong and contrary feelings. As the novel unfolds it becomes clear that Gwendolen is considered 'forsaken' by the narrator: not so much for submitting to the impulse to gamble but for returning to the gaming table in despair, after the discovery of her family's ruin. Yet rather than taking this impulse to signify an excess of desire, the narrator notes that Gwendolen 'had gone to the roulette-table not because of passion, but in search of it'; a motive which suggests a deficit rather than a surfeit of desire. It transpires that Deronda too is in search of passion on the occasion of his appearance at Leubronn: possession of a family secret regarding his legitimacy - his 'entailed disadvantage' - means that 'round every trivial incident which imagination could connect with his suspicions, a newly-roused set of feelings were ready to cluster themselves' (*DD* p.215; p.207). These introductory scenes, in which Gwendolen's paternal emeralds are pawned and then returned to their rightful owner wrapped in Deronda's torn-off handkerchief, are themselves a summary of the novel. What are referred to as 'jewels' by the narrator in the manuscript become 'ornaments' in the first edition, a correction which implies that Gwendolen - like Hetty Sorrel and Rosamond Vincy before her - fails to confer significance on a paternal gift and instead sells her dead father's jewels for their exchange value, thus anticipating her own function in the circuit of marriage. These dealings with the jewels parallel Eugénie Grandet's handling of her father's gold coins when, through a sleight of emotional logic, Eugénie assigns her patrimony to Charles, all the while hoping the slippage won't be noticed by her father.

In running away to Leubronn, a journey which enacts the ego's escape from self-knowledge, Gwendolen prepares for her unconscious identification with that which she reviles - the fallen woman. It is no oversight that the significance of Gwendolen's and Deronda's appearances at Leubronn should be explained respectively two and fourteen chapters after they are introduced; for Eliot's professed wish is that the reader be forced to respond actively to the narrative element of her novels. This wish is based on her understanding of the way curiosity and knowledge work co-operatively and, in particular, circuitously:

> indirect ways of arriving at knowledge are always the most stirring even in relation to impersonal

> subjects [...]. Curiosity becomes the more eager from the incompleteness of the first information. Moreover, it is in this way that memory works in its incidental revival of events: some salient experience appears in inward vision, and in consequence the antecedent facts are retraced from what is regarded as the beginning of the episode in which that experience made a more or less strikingly memorable part.16

It is in matters that arouse curiosity acutely that research most earnestly follows: it is the bald fact that Deronda knows little about Gwendolen nor her story quickens his interest in her; equally hers in him, as well as the reader's in them both. Compelled by the narrative workings of mutual curiosity - another phrase for sexual attraction in its largest sense, it is the tension of actively not knowing each other's histories, of suffering 'from the incompleteness of the first information', that seals Deronda's and Gwendolen's intimacy.

Not until Gwendolen returns to Offendene after her stay Europe, when the narrative jumps back to the series of events which led up to her journey to Leubronn, does the reader discover why Gwendolen is afraid of herself. The hysterical traits of the heroine display, as with the sympathy attributed to Deronda, an overdetermined role in this narrative. It is because Gwendolen knows she doesn't know what frightens her, beyond the object to which she attaches phobic fear, that she is fearful of exposure to situations in which self-consciousness ceases to operate: to open spaces and darkness. In an extremity of hysterical crisis others drop away from Gwendolen, leaving the heroine alone: divested of an identity assumed co-operatively and of a 'self' legitimated within. The drama the young people put on from The *Winters' Tale* for the neighbourhood of Offendene echoes to all outward intents the celebrated scene from Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, until that is, Gwendolen is helped shrieking then mute from the stage; leaving the audience - and reader - to share an incomprehension as to the source of her fear. Stripped of her queenly composure, Gwendolen is thrust into a darkness of unseen fears: 'Gwendolen's will had seemed imperious in its small girlish sway; but it was the will of a creature with a large discourse of imaginative fears: a shadow would have been enough to relax its hold' (*DD* p.477). A dynamic opposition, between worldly omnipotence and psychic collapse, and between wholesale virtue and abject unworth, quickly becomes a feature of the heroine's inner life; a life which, but for a few public showings, is witnessed only by intimates - Mrs Davilow, Deronda, and Grandcourt. Even with - and perhaps because of - the provision of interior monologue, Gwendolen's character lends itself to no ready summary; hence the narrator remarks on the heroine's 'iridescence' of character, a feature which is put down to 'the play of various, nay, contrary tendencies' (*DD* p.72). Yet the egoism literary critics frequently ascribe to Gwendolen appears ambiguous on a careful reading, since so many descriptions of the heroine touch on the

secondary and implicitly defensive nature of her pursuit of pleasure as a guide to action. Thus Gwendolen 'meant to do what was pleasant to herself in a striking manner; or rather, whatever she could do so as to strike others with admiration and get in that reflected way a more ardent sense of living' (*DD* p.69). It is, then, 'in that reflected way', that an emphatic secondary narcissism makes up for a shortfall of primary narcissism. Moreover the presence of neurotic defences, through which the ego maintains a continuous guard against instinctual impulse, is evident in Gwendolen from the outset. In an early description of the heroine, the narrator notes: 'now that she was twenty or more, some of her native force had turned into a self-control by which she guarded herself against penitential humiliation' (*DD* p.53). With passing years and the progression of the narrative, Gwendolen develops more in the sphere of defence than in that of maturity. What the narrative elaborates is the way in which these defences are directed not against external dangers but against internal wounds, and are fuelled by a libidinal strength which the narrator refers to as the heroine's 'native force'.

The experience of humiliation presumes, as Gwendolen's story comes to show, that the harm inflicted by an external slight rubs against an internal wound. When the heroine reacts to the criticism of the musical impresario Klesmer, the narrator suggests that 'his words had really bitten into her self-confidence and turned it into the pain of a bleeding wound' (*DD* p.305). Gwendolen's confidence relates to and feeds an internal pain, and conceivably - in a secondary masochistic form - it is this pain which explains her proud confidence. In Gwendolen's interview with Klesmer a split is revealed, between the musician's insights into the cultural world and the inflated demands that the heroine would make upon it; a conflict which derives from Gwendolen's lofty, untested ideals and her limited capacity to exonerate herself before them. The musician intimates that Gwendolen will never sing because she lacks the fortitude and exigency which transforms a cultural pursuit into a professional vocation. Klesmer represents a totemic figure who, within the narrative, functions as an index of cultural value. In contrast, the egoism and wilfulness which characterizes Gwendolen is hysterically reactive; her concern for grace and sanction works to conceal an underlying conviction of moral ugliness. From this suppressed conviction Gwendolen's desires for prepossession, property, and superiority arise, which suggests that the heroine's 'queenship' depends on patronage, on external confirmation, for its continuance. This paradox finds an echo in the provincial court that Eugénie Grandet presides over at the end of Balzac's novel, in which the heroine's self-interested 'courtiers' keep up the lie of her supremacy, despite the overt narrowness of her existence.

A complex psychical drama which turns on the heroine's humiliation and helplessness, begins the moment the narrator introduces Gwendolen. It is humiliation which prompts Gwendolen's return to the gambling table in reaction to the news of her family's bankruptcy, and it is helplessness which provokes her collapse during *The Winter's Tale*, on sighting an image that emerges from a 'nowhere' of psychic depths. Like her passion for gambling, Gwendolen's collapse during the performance is presented to the audience as inexplicable; and yet, like her lust for gambling, the hysterical dread this incident calls forth elicits considerable sense once its details and background are disclosed. In the opening scenes the opacity of Gwendolen's dread is made apparent: 'solitude in any wide scene impressed her with an undefined feeling of immeasurable distance aloof from her, in the midst of which she was helplessly incapable of asserting herself' (*DD* pp.94-95). As the novel develops, the heroine's helplessness in the face of 'an immeasurable distance aloof from her' is contrasted with the capacity to act freely, independent of the support of others. When Gwendolen obtains the marital status that she covets, as the eldest of four daughters of a financially embarrassed, middle-class, widowed mother, this contrast is obvious. The constraints of her situation in terms of legitimate solutions - a governessing post or a hasty marriage - is closely tied to the temptation that marriage to Grandcourt poses. Getting what Gwendolen wants, which is to extricate herself and her family from financial hardship, is thus intimately linked with succumbing to a temptation which involves getting just what she deserves, in terms of a moral come-uppance.

The impossible nature of the choice that confronts Gwendolen hints at the function of the image of the drowning face - not drowned but drowning - which provokes her hysterical helplessness. In an essay on phobia, Adam Phillips quotes Wittgenstein to clarify an underlying connection between dread and temptation: 'a face which inspires fear or delight (the object of fear or delight) is not on that account its cause, but - one might say - its target'.[17] The underlying mystery of this novel is what the target of Gwendolen's fascination - a term which subsumes positive and negative terms - really is. In a throwaway aside to her mother, Gwendolen skittishly remarks that 'all the greatest criminals are women'. Although the drama of this narrative remains distinct from criminology, ultimately it rests on the imponderable question of what Gwendolen is capable of doing in those moments when psychical controls leave her. Assuming Eliot's agreement with G. H. Lewes, that the mind is a 'palimpsest' inscribed with wishes, acts, and half-formed intents, it follows that there can be no simple explication of Gwendolen's behaviour in

terms of right and wrong, good and bad, virtue and sin.[18] The uncertainty which surrounds what Gwendolen is capable of doing rests on the dynamic aspect of consciousness which can, on occasion, blur the line between wish, intent,and act. This blurring is provoked by situations in which fear, anxiety, or desire are a prominent feature. In his discussion of anxiety in *Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety* (1926), Freud suggests that a potential real danger, comprehended and absorbed by the ego, may direct the ego to suppress intense libidinal and aggressive impulses, for fear of a recrimination modelled on the original danger. This circuit, once set up, is difficult to break: 'an instinctual demand often only becomes an (internal) danger because its satisfaction would bring on an external danger - that is, because the internal danger represents an external one' (*SE* 20 pp.167-68). A pressing desire may be interpreted by the ego as a potential danger if its satisfaction is linked to an anticipated punishment; particularly, in its feminine form, when it is the harbinger of an external loss of love.

Given that under certain circumstances an external danger may be taken inside, to there police the psyche, it is possible to interpret the fear that besets Gwendolen in terms other than egoism, ignorance, and a fallen nature. Gwendolen's anxious fears are, on a psychical level, the measure of the punishment she pre-emptively and unconsciously expects will follow from the realization of her desires. This compound danger comprises humiliation - suffering the curse of the loving object, and helplessness - being without the capacity to interest the loving object. This is the trauma that Gwendolen variously provokes, defends against, and ultimately suffers in this novel. Deronda's commendation that Gwendolen should transform her 'fear into a safeguard' and thus make the consequences of her fantasies 'passionately present' to herself, obliges her to effect a conscious inhibition. Eliot's representation of the heroine's inner life is particularly acute in this novel. Gwendolen's hysterical conflict figures in great detail, becoming a drama in itself:

> In Gwendolen's consciousness Temptation and Dread met and stared like two pale phantoms, each seeing itself in the other - each obstructed by its own image; and all the while her fuller self beheld the apparitions and sobbed for deliverance from them. (*DD* p.738)

As in *Villette*, when the narrator employs the upper-case to elevate Reason and Imagination to free-standing concepts, here Temptation and Dread are characters in Gwendolen's consciousness. In Eliot's text these characters are linked to the images from which they derive and, more pressingly, from the impulses which animate them. As the novel develops these images increase in the pressure they exert on the heroine: 'Side by side with the dread of her husband had grown the self-dread which urged her to flee from the pursuing images wrought by her pent-up impulse' (*DD* p.737). A dread which is so consuming that its object is the self who

experiences it drives Gwendolen on; a heroine who is pursued by images less on a level of an imaginative haunting than on that of an internal battle between desire and conscience.

In describing Gwendolen the narrator remarks that she is a heroine for whom 'passion had begun negatively'. The idea of Gwendolen as 'spoiled' is also conveyed by the narrator, both through her maternal dependence on Deronda and her mother and, more profoundly, through the inference that the heroine's psyche has sustained prior harm. Both hysterical revulsion and spoiling occur when the psyche, reacting to stimuli from without, effects a primary repression to eradicate unwanted stimulus, along with any reminder of it. A psychoanalytic understanding of spoiling concentrates on the prolonged dependence of the child on the object it regards as essential: as a result of it the necessary and slow dissolution of ties to the object are arrested, owing to the child's belief that it is only with the support of this essential object that danger can be defended against. If this psychical bond is broken, while this idea is still in play, the child becomes convinced - proportionate to a sense of his own inner badness and the essential object's utter goodness - that he is endangered. This fantasy is accompanied by a sense of helplessness which may, as in Gwendolen's case, be imaginatively envisioned as death. It appears that for Gwendolen death intimates a collapse in which the boundaries of self and other are dissolved; not in a fond recall of union but in a ghastly spectre of imaginative breakdown. In giving her heroine the characteristic of spoiling Eliot implies that the emotional harm done to Gwendolen happened too early for recourse to defence, so that hysterical dread and overweening dependence are its results.[19] Moreover the attribute of spoiling suggests that the heroine's dependence and helplessness find a link in their appeal to another - in this case to Deronda.

The hysteric, who suffers from spoiling, appeals to another to organize an experience which, lacking adequate psychical defences, intermittently risks collapse. None the less Eliot engages her heroine, who she refers to as a 'spoilt child', in a situation of romantic courtship in which choice, the delimiting of one course of action over another, is crucial; even though choice, properly defined, assumes the capacity to entertain and assess multiple possibilities in an enlightened way. Book Four of *Daniel Deronda*, which is entitled 'Gwendolen Gets Her Choice', is surely a verbal play when what Gwendolen gets is less her choice, which as a result of hysterical defence is limited in its powers, than her due deserts. As the novel proceeds, it seems that Gwendolen gets less and less what she wants and more and more what she deserves, and this according to the law pinpointed in the novel's epigraph. On a psychological level, Gwendolen is to be blamed for actions which it is impossible to be blameworthy for - effectively for being spoiled by

another's care. Unlike Deronda, who is considered worthy of what he cannot deserve in any individual capacity - his Jewish ancestry, Gwendolen is implicitly deemed beyond salvation, except in so far as she can benefit from her identification with the virtues and apprehensions inscribed in her relation to Deronda.

Once Gwendolen has broken an unwritten human law, that freedom is only freedom as long as one's exercise of it does not hamper that of another, salvation is the only hope left to her. Gwendolen's choices shrink radically once she meets Grandcourt's mistress and her fiance's illegitimate children, and realizes that in choosing to marry Grandcourt she is refusing to respect a prior claim. This is not to suggest Gwendolen doesn't choose: she does; but it is a choice which wracks her within and, by virtue of its illicit nature, it becomes incommunicable to another. It is this secret which sends the heroine to Leubronn and motivates her to meet Mrs Glasher on her return. The latter meeting has dream-like qualities: the mistress's voice, words, and expression haunt Gwendolen with their intense appeal that the heroine should undo a wrong she has already committed, which is to want something that is not rightfully hers. Through meeting Lydia Glasher Gwendolen's fears are incarnated in a paradoxical image of suffering and power which indicts Gwendolen from without. The heroine's sense of helplessness, which is also a species of hopelessness, assumes that her fears - fantasies of wickedness which exceed any wrong-doing - are ineradicable, catastrophic. Paradoxically, meeting Mrs Glasher relieves Gwendolen, at least on an unconscious level, because in recognizing her rival Gwendolen conjoins her sensations of fear with an image of doom, a coupling which allows this fused image and idea to be kept at arm's length from consciousness. This removal from consciousness of the idea attached to the doom-laden image has a purpose: which is that in replacing a prohibition with a phobia the heroine is alleviated from having to heed Lydia Glasher's warning, and instead renders herself helpless before an image she no longer recognizes. This image provides something for Gwendolen to be hysterical about: precisely the fear of causing the unhappiness of another; an unhappiness which, neurotically apprehended, is visited on Gwendolen too. From now on Gwendolen can, at hysterical moments, compulsively recall the face of Mrs Glasher and in so doing, frame fears of boundlessness within. For although the face of Mrs Glasher is, in a psychical sense, unwelcome company, her image is company all the same, something which is gainful for a heroine who manifests a dread of solitude.

To take a psychical rather than a moral viewpoint in regard to Gwendolen's responsibility for her fantasies and actions involves deciding which impulse finds expression first in her: the

impulse for good or the impulse for bad. Such a sequence is never made clear in the presentation of Gwendolen: like Lucy Snowe's continual vacillation between a forward direction and a backward movement, Gwendolen's wishes, desires, and acts bear no seamless chronology, except for the order in which the narrator conveys them. The question of what comes first: the wish for good or the dread for bad, is then perhaps irresolvable. Nevertheless it remains an important question, one which Eliot pursued as a psychological problem independent of her activity as a novelist. In a 1860's review of Lecky's *Influence of Rationalism*, Eliot expresses strong views on the conditions in which negative fear comes to succeed positive hope:

> Fear is earlier born than hope, lays a stronger grasp on man's system than any other passion, and remains master of a larger group of involuntary actions. A chief aspect of man's moral development is the slow subduing of fear by the gradual growth of intelligence, and its suppression as a motive by the presence of impulses less animally selfish; so that in relation to invisible Power, fear at last ceases to exist, save in that interfusion with higher faculties which we call awe.20

Fear is also explained by Darwin, whose works Eliot read closely, as originating in the primitive nature of mankind and as such can be surpassed by intellect and reason. In her portrayal of Gwendolen, during those moments when fear extinguishes all hope for good, Eliot remains loyal to Darwin's description of fear in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. In this book Darwin produces a checklist for fear which resembles Charcot's classification of 'stigmata' during hysterical attacks:

> As fear increases into an agony of terror, the heart beats wildly, or may fail to act, and faintness ensues; there is a death-like pallor [...] the protruding eyeballs are fixed on the object of terror [...] The pupils are enormously dilated [...] The arms may be protruded as if to avert some dreadful danger [...] In other cases there is a sudden and uncontrollable tendency to headlong flight. [...] As fear rises to an extreme pitch the dreadful scream of terror is heard [...] All the muscles of the body are relaxed. Utter prostration soon follows, the mental powers fail.21

The narrator's description of the heroine's collapse during *The Winter's Tale* follows this checklist closely. Moreover this scene prefigures two later scenes, firstly when Gwendolen receives Mrs Glasher's diamonds on her wedding night and drops them before screaming, and secondly when she is hauled shaking from the harbour in Genoa after Grandcourt's drowning. Darwin also noted that an access of terror is distinct from the shrinking reaction which characterizes fear, the former being a physically-charged reaction which is involuntarily expressed. In referring to the research of Sir Charles Bell, Darwin notes that horror and terror produce excitement: 'horror is full of energy; the body is in the utmost tension, not unnerved by fear'.[22] This rigid excitement anticipates Freud's claim that every hysterical attack, as an abortive yet explicit action, is also an attempt to reproduce pleasure (*SE* 9 pp.155-56).

The psychological research of Darwin, Bell, and Freud gives an express clue to Gwendolen's

behaviour, for it suggests that the heroine's susceptibility to hysterical attacks lies less in a discharge of fear than in the suppression of an action which, should it be performed, she unconsciously fears will provoke retaliation. The greatest fear - and hidden desire - that Gwendolen experiences is for the image of the dead face and fleeing figure, which appears behind the sliding door of a cabinet at Offendene. Standing motionless as Hermione in the play scene, Gwendolen waits for 'Music' to awaken her:

> Hermione, her arm resting on a pillar, was elevated by about six inches, which she counted on as a means of showing her pretty foot and instep, when at the given signal she should advance and descend. [...] before Hermione had put forth her foot, the movable panel, which was on a line with the piano, flew open on the right opposite the stage and disclosed the picture of the dead face and the fleeing figure, brought out in pale definiteness by the position of the waxlights. Everyone was startled, but all eyes in the act of turning towards the opened panel were recalled by a piercing cry from Gwendolen, who stood without change of attitude, but with a change of expression that was terrifying in its terror. She looked like a statue into which a soul of Fear had entered: her pallid lips were parted; her eyes, usually narrowed under their long lashes, were dilated and fixed. [...] the touch of her mother's arm had the effect of an electric charge; Gwendolen fell on her knees and put her hands before her face. She was still trembling, but mute, and it seemed that she had self-consciousness enough to aim at controlling her signs of terror, for she presently allowed herself to be raised from her kneeling posture and led away [...] (*DD* pp.91-92)

Terror, as opposed to fear, afflicts the heroine as she sees her fantasies presented before her. The pleasure this experience inspires is not however registered in consciousness: it is the sensation of an unconscious satisfaction which causes Gwendolen to stand 'like a statue into which a soul of Fear had entered'. During this hallucinatory pleasure - similar to that experienced by Lucy Snowe as the Nun swoops down on her in the garden alley - a demarcation between imaginative and real worlds momentarily lapses. In this moment a feared punishment, along with the satisfaction which elicits it, is suppressed; instead Gwendolen experiences a hysterical attack which neither realizes her wish to escape an impending danger, nor successfully represses its effects from consciousness.

When an action is contemplated in a state of anxiety, as is Gwendolen's engagement to Grandcourt, the conditions for positive choice are suspended. Once Gwendolen has begun a career fostered in phobic depths rather than in the greater light of consciousness, in which descent rather than ascent and apprehension rather than expectation marks its passage, the question of the heroine's responsibility for her actions changes hue. Viewed by acquaintances as a 'queen', Gwendolen is yet depicted by the narrator as psychically impotent, as powerless to halt the awful rapidity of her downward spiral, her 'sick dream'. To have wanted wealth, power, and privilege is hardly an indisputable sign of egoism when the heroine's deliberation over them is

subsumed by anxiety:

> The brilliant position she had longed for, the imagined freedom she would create for herself in marriage, the deliverance from the dull insignificance of her girlhood - all were immediately before her; and yet they had come to her hunger like food with the taint of sacrilege upon it, which she must snatch with terror. (*DD* p.356)

Such a choice implies a schema of scarcity and defence rather than one of greed and attack. And elsewhere: 'she was overcome like the thirsty one who is drawn towards the seeming water in the desert, overcome with the suffused sense that here in this man's homage to her lay the rescue from helpless subjection to an oppressive lot' (*DD* p.346). Gwendolen's decision to marry Grandcourt and to defy Mrs Glasher increases the pressure on her by effecting a dissociation of act and thought: 'At last she raised herself with a determination to do as she would do if she had started on horseback, and go on with spirit, whatever ideas might be running in her head' (*DD* p.357). These ideas that run continuously through Gwendolen's mind, which are dissociated from their original referents through repression, are what Deronda's influence is called upon to stay. This peculiar influence combines 'awe' with 'superstitious dread': Deronda 'was unique to her among men, because he had impressed her as being not her admirer but her superior: in some mysterious way he was becoming a part of her conscience' (*DD* p.468).

What Gwendolen's conscience is required to appease is something that overtaxes the strength available to it: a wickedness which the psychoanalyst Joseph H. Smith, in an essay on 'Primitive Guilt', attributes to a deed which 'preceded and exceeded that which could be accounted for by any wrong-doing'.[23] Strictly speaking this wicked deed is neither an act nor a fantasy, instead it involves a fantasied realization of a dark wish. Gwendolen is in flight from her hates, and yet it is to these hates that, uncomprehendingly, she is closely bound. A psychoanalytic explanation of Gwendolen's hates lies in the way early relations of love and hate, applicable to partial objects, may be masked by the later relations of loving and being loved, which are dependent on a psychical investment of 'whole' objects. After her refusal of Rex's declaration of love Gwendolen, in conversation with her mother, claims she cannot love anyone, can only hate them; in this she admits a kind of truth - but as such it characterizes a phase of the psyche before whole objects are conceived of by the child (*DD* p.115). Gwendolen's not knowing her own mind in respect of the limited choices open to her suggests a vacillation in which objects are attractive and repulsive in turn, and this in accordance with basic, undiscriminating criteria. However firmly Gwendolen intends to remain in control throughout her courtship, a recurring psychical insurgence in which her ego seeks out in fascination that which is repressed from consciousness, provides an ongoing source of unrest. Consequently all Gwendolen's successes

- whether in archery, society, horseriding, or marriage - exude a manic edge; a result of her fearful surmise that every triumph would soon sour were its origins in mixed motives to be revealed.

The transformation of Gwendolen's wishes into dread, of confident assertion into hysterical anxiety, operates like a Dostoevskian vision in which hell is the absence of self. The sexualization of this shift focuses on the prospect of Gwendolen's fall, for it is in identifying with her predecessor and rival Lydia Glasher that the heroine begins her own fall from grace. In the midst of an outwardly demure courtship, the heroine ponders the split nature of the choice which grips her:

> Even in Gwendolen's mind that result [of Grandcourt's proposing the next day] was one of two likelihoods that presented themselves alternately, one of two decisions towards which she was being precipitated, as if they were on two sides of a boundary-line and she did not know on which side she should fall. This subjection to a possible self, a self not to be absolutely predicted about, caused her some astonishment and terror: her favourite key of life - doing what she liked - seemed to fail her, and she could not foresee what at a given moment she might like to do. (*DD* pp.172-73)

This not knowing what 'she might like to do' signals Gwendolen's proximity to an inhibition which, obscuring direct knowledge of self, yet drives her onward, but in a circular and not a linear direction. The heroine's fear of falling crystallizes in her meeting with Lydia Glasher at the appropriately named Whispering Stones. Just as Gwendolen's preliminary fears concentrate themselves on a painting of a drowning face, Gwendolen's later fears focus on the haunting facial expression and auditory curse of Grandcourt's mistress: 'Gwendolen, watching Mrs Glasher's face while she spoke, felt a sort of terror: it was as if some ghastly vision had come to her in a dream and said, 'I am a woman's life" (*DD* pp.189-90). This auditory image, with the capacity to foretell the future, is pulled into a dream-like present and affixed to a facial image.

The impact of Lydia Glasher's words on Gwendolen resembles the traumatic moment Freud's patient Dora experienced with Herr K., when she is propositioned by the latter during a family holiday at a health resort. Herr K.'s proposition to Dora, which includes the disclosure of his own wife's depressed value, is absorbed by Dora as a personal offence (*SE* 7 p.89). To the degree that Dora identifies with the femininity of Frau K., she suffers when its value is diminished by Herr K.. It is the identification of Gwendolen and Dora with the sexual availability of mature, forsaken, and yet and implicitly idealized women that casts a similar shadow over their own fates, producing an inhibition which clouds conscious judgement. This hysterical mechanism of identification is complicated by an element of rivalry within it. In a change from the manuscript to the first edition of *Daniel Deronda*, this complication is highlighted: Gwendolen's first impression of Lydia Glasher in

the manuscript is that she 'is unmistakably a lady who must have been handsomer than herself', while in the first edition this flash of rivalry is effaced, so that Gwendolen perceives a woman who is 'unmistakably a lady, and one who must have been exceedingly handsome'.[24] It is in comparing herself with the woman cast off, a woman who yet displays greater allure than the heroine, that Gwendolen absorbs Mrs Glasher's lot as if it were - far from specific to the role of the mistress - germane to all women.

Gwendolen identifies with Mrs Glasher in a circuit which stipulates that love, innocence, and progeny all change hands at the market price. Gwendolen's immediate response to the sudden knowledge which contact with Mrs Glasher brings, and it is a response that accompanies her to Leubronn, is bitterness:

> Perhaps other men's lives were of the same kind - full of secrets which made the ignorant suppositions of the woman they wanted to marry a farce at which they were laughing in their sleeves. These feelings of disgust and indignation had sunk deep. (*DD* p.343).

A stinging sense of the illegitimacy of her betrothal inheres in Gwendolen's conviction that everything previously shared by Grandcourt and Lydia Glasher (and in Dora's case by Herr K. and Frau K.), mars Gwendolen's own pledge to Grandcourt. In a spontaneous revulsion Gwendolen experiences herself as secondhand, as next in a line of dirty linen, an emotion which well expresses Freud's concept of hysterical disgust. Ascribed to Gwendolen, this emotion is elaborated as 'a feeling which in the first instance would hardly be too strongly described as indignation and loathing that she should have been expected to unite herself with an outworn life, full of backward secrets which must have been more keenly felt than any associations with *her*' (*DD* p.343). Gwendolen's anticipation of being next in line compels her to think that acceptance of Grandcourt, in knowing receipt of his 'backward secrets', assures her an upper hand in marriage. In fact the heroine's upper hand is anything but assured: for in unconsciously identifying with the woman spurned, Gwendolen joins that category of women that includes her own forsaken mother. Of course on a conscious level this membership is denied: "Mama managed badly,' was her way of summing up what she had seen of her mother's experience: she herself would manage quite differently' (*DD* p.342). In these ways the meeting with Lydia Glasher functions to suppress the secret which imperceptibly becomes the heroine's own through her disavowal of it.

From this point in the narrative Gwendolen is convinced that she cannot afford to go backward, either in action or in memory. To do so would be to contemplate a lesser, commonplace world from which she seeks to extricate herself precisely through forward movement. The narrator

observes that Gwendolen's 'mood of youthful, elated desperation had a tidal recurrence. She could dare anything that lay before her sooner than she could choose to go backward into humiliation' (*DD* p.381). This risk is accompanied by a peculiar sense of foreboding which reflects a policing of pleasure by the conscious ego. In the months either side of her marriage, Gwendolen senses 'something like a new soul, which had better, but also worse, possibilities than her former poise of crude self-confidence: among the forces she had come to dread was something within her that troubled satisfaction' (*DD* p.378). The effect of this enigmatic 'something', a hysterical irritant in the experience of pleasure, is to disturb the processes which delineate an internal self and an external world, separating them in such a way that goodness and pleasure abide within, while badness and pain remain without. As a consequence Gwendolen experiences a shrinking of self: 'her confidence in herself and her destiny had turned into remorse and dread; she trusted neither herself nor her future' (*DD* p.484).

Only later in the narrative do we realize that the exciting and irritating 'something' which this heroine dreads the return of is encapsulated by a certain tantalizing object, an ornamental knife. In securing this silver object for her sole possession, during early marriage, Gwendolen hysterically - knowing unconsciously yet not knowing consciously - proceeds to deny herself the use of it. A combination of secrecy and deceit is striking in Gwendolen's behaviour surrounding the knife. Like Freud, provoked alternately to display and to hide away his betrothed's photographic portrait, Gwendolen is unable to take conscious possession of this silver knife, for fear of the fantasies it spawns. These fantasies remain a half-kept secret to her ego; yet, to the degree such a secret is violable, its effects seep into consciousness. The leaking that results from the best-kept secret is captured by a quotation from La Fontaine, which heads Chapter 36:

> Rien ne pèse tant qu'un secret,
> Le porter loin est difficile aux dames:
> Et je sçais mesme sur ce fait
> Bon nombre d'hommes qui sont femmes. (*DD* p.485)

La Fontaine is making a play on a secondary character trait - that of indiscretion, by construing it as a primary sexual characteristic - that of femininity. Freud too, in his *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (1905), makes the psyche's inability to keep a secret synonymous with femininity (*SE* 7 p.77-78). What is isolated by La Fontaine and Freud is not a female sexual characteristic so much an element of femininity which, given to men and women, makes every secret vulnerable. Whether or not it is divulged outright every secret comes to light in a displaced fashion through gestures and lapses that dramatize suppressed knowledge; overtly through denial and lying, and indirectly through transpositions like embarrassment and blurting. Such denial and deceit do not

have the status of falsehood, nor does it relate to what consciousness chooses not to know in any wilful sense, rather it is a question of what the ego can afford to know without undermining the defences on which its security depends. From this perspective, to commit an indiscretion is not primarily to risk an offence to society, rather it is to offend a psychical inhibition which regards certain kinds of knowledge as unacceptable.

Gwendolen's secret is complex because it assumes knowledge unknown to the ego; the repressed awareness of something which cannot be consciously known. This incompatible unknown breaks into Gwendolen's awareness in the form of murderous impulses. Such impulses are distinct from imaginatively construed fantasies which, conceived in reverie, may be reconciled with reality. Gwendolen's unknowable secret is bound up with the nuclear complex and, in particular, with wishes for the death of what is ultimately unmurderable: a figure deriving from infancy that not only refuses to die but, because internalized by the subject who would murder it, cannot die - except of course in suicide. Like Leonora Halm-Eberstein in *Daniel Deronda*, and Lucy Snowe in *Villette*, Gwendolen is persecuted by a figure who will never truly die because it never truly lived; being an inhabitant of a psychical realm which is hidden from external observation as keenly as from the subject who entertains it. This is the secret Gwendolen cannot tell, even under the compulsion to reveal all which she experiences with Deronda - that 'terrible-browed angel from whom she could not think of concealing any deed' (*DD* p.737).

As a real object the knife is connected to the phobic object: to the painted image of the 'outstretched arms' of a fleeing girl. The knife explains the content of Gwendolen's phobia, in that it is through her denial of its imaginative use as an offensive instrument in fantasy, that she identifies herself with the fleeing agent of a murderous act. These neurotic elements crystallize around the knife, which operates within the narrative as a hidden seam; sensed rather than seen, the knife prefigures the events it provokes. As a symbol the silver willow-shaped knife stands for the process of repression which severs idea from affect, and as such it is intrinsic to the anxiety hysteria which Gwendolen suffers. Within the context of anxiety hysteria the knife's significance as a symbol is secondary to the free-floating anxiety which precedes it and which it comes to organize. On a psychical level, the heroine's task in this narrative is to institute a psychical symbol - the drowning face, the knife, Deronda's 'severe' words - as a defence against recurrent anxiety. According to the logic of neurosis, of secondary defence with an inverse gain, it is only with the erection of phobia that hysterical dread, characterized by Freud as 'uninhibitability', can be stemmed. The advice Gwendolen receives from Deronda, that she should suppress her dread of

wickedness by imaginatively taking hold of the fears such wickedness inspires, can be seen in the light of neurosis to yield questionable gains. For the suppression of these fantasies has the effect of depleting the erotic resources on which a belief in goodness - ultimately more powerful than fears for the bad - finally rests.

The drowning of Grandcourt collapses Gwendolen's fears through an externalization of them. Only after this collapse can Gwendolen communicate her illicit and exciting dread to Deronda. The secret of the knife is not redeemed through the reparative workings of intimacy, even after the wish it symbolizes is confided to Deronda:

> It had all been in my mind when I first spoke to you - when we were at the Abbey. I had done something then. I could not tell you that. It was the only thing I did towards carrying out my thoughts. They went about over everything; but they all remained like dreadful dreams - all but one. I did one act - and I never undid it - it is there still - as long ago as when we were at Ryelands. There it was - something my fingers longed for among the beautiful toys in the cabinet in my boudoir - small and sharp, like a long willow leaf in a silver sheath. I locked it in the drawer of my dressing-case. I was continually haunted with it, and how I should use it. I fancied myself putting it under my pillow. But I never did. I never looked at it again. I dared not unlock the drawer: it had a key all to itself [...] (*DD* p.756)

The projective sway that Deronda exerts over Gwendolen is based on an intimacy which impels Gwendolen to Deronda's side, and then maintains a discrete distance- one from the other. What the function of the knife shows is less the content of Gwendolen's suppressed fantasies and acts, than the effects of their inhibition. As an unmistakably hysterical signifier the knife becomes available to Gwendolen's psyche, and thus communicable in consciousness, only when the defensive structures which maintain its exile lapse. As Adam Phillips points out in his essay on phobia:

> The profoundest way of recognizing something, or the only way of recognizing some things, Freud will imply, is through hiding them from oneself. And what is profound, or rather of interest is not only what is hidden but also the ways one has of hiding it. We know only, of course, - as in phobia - about the repressions which break down.25

The late disclosure of Gwendolen's hysterical desire, as it is manifest in dread, is thus not an act of authorial deception - of gratuitous psychological intrigue - but a tacit expression of thought processes which are suspended from consciousness.

In psychical terms the secret of the knife illuminates an aspect of consciousness which cannot be communicated, since it is kept in a realm which is independent of the subject's will. As such it accentuates the role of the narrator, on whom the task of representing such a lapse falls. It is significant that among George Eliot's novels, *Daniel Deronda* provides a rare instance in which the narrator withholds an key element of the plot entirely. What the enigma of the knife highlights

is much less an act of vengeance which might be carried out by the heroine should favourable circumstances arise, than the pure hysterical excitement which it generates in the heroine. Moreover what Gwendolen is never to know consciously, at least as long as her proud defences hold out, is the fury her position arouses in her. Like the slippage which occurs when anxiety is anchored to an object in phobia, only focused on an object does Gwendolen's dread become identifiable as hatred - and potentially as vengeance. Anxiety finds its release in phobia, in the organization of sexual anxiety around an object which symbolizes it; likewise aggressive dread finds its release in the expression of hate. The narrator pays considerable attention to the extremity of such emotions, which is undertaken in a style reminiscent of Eliot's critical writings:

> The intensest form of hatred is that rooted in fear, which compels to silence and drives vehemence into a constructive vindictiveness, an imaginary annihilation of the detested object, something like the hidden rites of vengeance with which the persecuted have made a dark vent for their rage, and soothed their suffering into dumbness. (*DD* p.737)

Such are the dark acts which, like a shadow play, vivify the heroine's mind, without her being able to articulate their progress through it. A facility to represent the shadows that move within her is not given to this hysterical heroine; as the narrator commiserates, 'poor Gwendolen had both too much and too little mental power to make herself exceptional' (*DD* p.667). This heroine is hysterical to the degree that she knows 'too much' and at the same time 'too little' to articulate her situation to herself, and thus to plot for its improvement.

Gwendolen lacks sufficient 'mental power' to realize her wishes as acts and, in so doing, to assume responsibility for them. Similarly it is the heroine's impotence, the reverse of an initial all-powerfulness, which prevents her from using Deronda to the full measure of their relation. The mandate to tell Deronda 'all', combined with a determination to conceal the extremity of her demands from him, becomes a vital necessity to Gwendolen, and as such provides a continual tension within the text. Struggling to communicate to Deronda a sense of the danger that presses upon her, a few days before her Mediterranean voyage, Gwendolen exclaims:

> 'I am a contemptible creature. I feel as if I should get wicked with hating people.'[...] She had forgotten everything but that image of her helpless misery which she was trying to make present to Deronda in broken allusive speech - wishing to convey but not express all her need. (*DD* p.672)

The intensity of Gwendolen's angry thoughts acts to quell them: instead they emerge, transposed, in the heroine's 'helpless misery', and in her increased reserve toward Deronda. Gwendolen's fate is to suffer hysterical inhibition from the same source she anticipates liberation from it: in her relation to Deronda. In order to respect this relation, Gwendolen is to embrace her fears as a brake against anxiety and wrong-doing, and thus to remain ignorant of the fantasies which, underlying conscious control, fuel hysterical fears. Thus Deronda urges:

> Turn your fear into a safeguard. Keep your dread fixed on the idea of increasing that remorse which is so bitter to you. Fixed meditation may do a great deal towards defining our longing or dread. We are not always in a state of strong emotion, and when we are calm we can use our memories and gradually change the bias of our fear, as we do our tastes. Take your fear as a safeguard. It is like quickness of hearing. It may make consequences passionately present to you. Try to take hold of your sensibility, and use it as if it were a faculty, like vision. (*DD* p.509)

By concentrating on the fantasied consequences of suppressed wishes Gwendolen is to ignore their origins in rebellion and rage; she is to cling fast to the influence of Deronda, and miraculously to rise above wickedness. The underlying progress of the heroine is thus less that of moral revelation than of neurotic transformation. Gwendolen's deliverance rests not on an investigation of those fears which are released in attacks of hysterical helplessness, but on the introduction of a phobic object - foremost 'that severe-browed angel' - to act as an internalized and hence permanent sever of intense images and unacceptable ideas.

Days before Grandcourt takes his unstable wife off for an extended Mediterranean voyage - a gesture which echoes Sergei's journey to Petersburg with the ailing Masha in *Family Happiness*, Gwendolen witnesses her husband publicly rebuff his mistress and children. This scene, which takes place near Rotten Row in Hyde Park, is crucial, because it completes Gwendolen's identification with Lydia Glasher. Remorse and sympathy for the disowned mistress paves the way for the heroine's realization that a like fate awaits her too, as Grandcourt's current wife:

> The Medusa-apparition was made effective beyond Lydia's conception by the shock it gave Gwendolen actually to see Grandcourt ignoring this woman who had once been the nearest in the world to him, along with the children she had borne him. And all the while the dark shadow thus cast on the lot of a woman destitute of acknowledged social dignity, spread itself over her visions of a future that might be her own, and made part of her dread on her own behalf. (*DD* p.668)

In this confrontation at Rotten Row the only anger Gwendolen is capable of showing is coloured with shame for herself, a mixture which silences a spontaneous outrage:

> Immediately she felt a rising rage against him mingling with her shame for herself, and the words, 'You might at least have raised your hat to her,' flew impetuously to her lips - but did not pass them. (*DD* p.667)

Like Eugénie Grandet, after the discovery of her father's callousness, Gwendolen's rejoinder is muffled by a recognition of her relative - and potentially minor - status in Grandcourt's affairs. In the opening remarks of *Studies on Hysteria* Freud calls attention to the way an offence absorbed in silence is equivalent to an unreturned blow; for the psychical reason that 'if the reaction is suppressed, the affect remains attached to the memory' (*SE* 2 p.8). Neither Gwendolen nor Eugénie respond to insults 'eye for an eye'; instead this response is converted into a reaction, the effects of which they suffer themselves. For it is this affect that 'remains attached to the memory' that is expressed as hysterical humiliation in both heroines. Like Madame Grandet, cowering at the

hands of an irascible Grandet, Gwendolen does not remonstrate against Grandcourt; for to do so not only would sully their marital relation, it would unnerve herself. In an early instance of cruelty at her husband's hands, Gwendolen asks: 'Why could she not rebel, and defy him? She longed to do it. But she might as well have tried to defy the texture of her nerves and the palpitations of her heart' (*DD* p.503). By suppressing an active response Gwendolen comes to express her relation to Grandcourt somatically, such that she opposes not her own husband but her own nervous system.

No character incarnates failed and culpable rebellion more plainly than Leonora Halm-Eberstein, Deronda's mother. Complaining of the yoke a Jewish ancestry has forced on her, Leonora confides to Deronda, who himself is metaphorically linked to the Sabine warriors who cannot kill kin: 'I wished I could have defied [my father] openly, but I never could. It was what I could not imagine: I could not act it to myself that I should begin to defy my father openly and succeed' (*DD* p.695). An exemplar of somatic conversion, through which failed mental processes take their 'leap' into the body, Leonora resigns herself to die unrepentant and in pain, apparently devoid of the positive emotions necessary for conciliation. Speaking to Deronda of her decision to pass on the ancestry she so long withheld from him, Leonora admits:

> 'I don't consent. We only consent to what we love. I obey something tyrannic' - she spread out her hands again - 'I am forced to be withered, to feel pain, to be dying slowly. Do I love that? Well, I have been forced to obey my dead father. I have been forced to tell you that you are a Jew, and deliver to you what he commanded me to deliver.' (*DD* p.693)

Like Gwendolen's superstitious decision to keep her father's emeralds after they have been anonymously returned to her, Leonora characterizes her bond to ancestry negatively, through hysterical defiance and somatic complaint - in obedience to a force greater than any experienced through love. Above all it is obedience to a power distinct from libidinal ties, implying a destructive potential, which characterizes Leonora's bond to her 'dead father'.

Gwendolen's suppressed identification with Mrs Glasher grooms her to accept a subordinate role in Grandcourt's life. Up to the scene at Rotten Row, Gwendolen's rage toward Grandcourt expresses itself in covert rebellion; but from that moment on this anger finds a target, and an animate one, in her husband. That she herself should be killed in retaliatory vigour within this fantasy is for Gwendolen the only imaginable outcome: 'the thought of [Grandcourt's] dying would not subsist: it turned as with a dream-change into the terror that she should die with his throttling fingers on her neck avenging that thought' (*DD* p.699). The heroine's phallic fears, in which only the best and worst possibilities are realized, here achieve an intensity equal to the

impulses which infuse them. Murderous thoughts which could, on reaching consciousness, entail a liberation from inhibition instead, within this phallic fantasy, signal catastrophe. Gwendolen's experience of phallic terror, of an excited dread which triggers fears for the self, gives thoughts and fantasies the status of culpable acts - thus extending possible offence into boundless realms. As long as Gwendolen's underlying fear is that wickedness may, if unrestrained, overwhelm goodness, her terrors and defences are ensured permanence - being held on to with the same tenacity that the key to the dressing-case which contains the offending knife is kept.

Although *Daniel Deronda* reaches its climax when Gwendolen sees 'her wish outside her' on the harbour at Genoa, the underlying narrative tension between recollection - or the return of memory, and repetition - or the return of unconscious acts, provides an ongoing stimulus. The morning before the drowning in Genoa is essential to this climax: blinded by waves of anger which, compounded by passivity, render her inactive, Gwendolen makes a last bid for freedom. Her confession to Deronda on the hotel steps enacts a prison break of sorts, being the last in a series of meetings where the heroine is prevented from using Deronda as confidant. In the weeks leading up to this meeting, Gwendolen, reduced to the run of Grandcourt's yacht - itself 'a plank on the ocean' - is depicted as a patient on a rest-cure. A few hours before bumping into Deronda, Gwendolen recalls 'a strangely-mixed dream in which she felt herself escaping over the Mont Cenis, and wondering to find it warmer even in the moonlight on the snow, till suddenly she met Deronda, who told her to go back' (*DD* p.740). Like Romola outside the gates of Florence, ordered to return to her husband's side by the unrelenting Savanorola, Gwendolen perceives Deronda as both mentor and jailor. During this period her relation to Grandcourt undergoes a similar distortion; over breakfast with her husband in Genoa, Gwendolen: 'felt her habitual stifling consciousness of having an immovable obstruction in her life, like the nightmare of beholding a single form that serves to arrest all passage though the wide country lies open' (*DD* p.744). This 'single form' works in a similar way to the image of the drowning face which holds Gwendolen's gaze fast to it: backward to the drowning face or forward to an 'immovable obstruction', in neither direction is Gwendolen's escape possible. The narrator reflects: 'the strife within her seemed like her own effort to escape from herself' (*DD* pp.746). Such flight, like Gwendolen's trip to Leubronn and her embrace of marriage, offers at best a transient escape, and can be appreciated only by a manically triumphant ego. What the narrative implies is that the sole choice open to Gwendolen is to decline all movement, either in a forward or backward direction. Instead she is to give herself up, and thus to dissolve the hysterical nucleus which distorts her relations to others. Like Freud's hysterical patients, who were persuaded on commencing treatment that with their co-operation

their neurotic misery would be replaced with common unhappiness, Gwendolen here confronts a purgatorial choice.

The externalization of Gwendolen's wish, quite apart from the shock that Grandcourt's drowning evokes, has perceivable effects on Deronda. In his unspoken damnation of Gwendolen after the boating accident, Deronda is liberated from unquiet yearnings which had until then drawn him to her. In this revelatory interview, the narrator confides of Deronda that:

> he had never throughout his relations with Gwendolen been free from the nervous consciousness that there was something to guard against not only on her own account but on his own - some precipitancy in the manifestation of impulsive feeling - some ruinous inroad of what is but momentary on the permanent chosen treasure of the heart - some spoiling of her trust.[...] How could his feeling for Gwendolen ever be exactly like his feeling for other women, even when there was one by whose side he desired to stand apart from them? Strangely her figure entered into the pictures of his present and future. (*DD* pp.683-84).

In assuming the role of spiritual guide, and in rising above the vagaries of itinerant desires, Deronda prepares himself for the conversion offered to him by Mordecai. Absolved of links with the two women, his mother and Gwendolen, who had most 'haunted' him - and who each receive him with their faces swathed in black lace, Deronda is at once exonerated and freed. Deronda is ready to: 'receive from Mordecai's mind the complete ideal shape of that personal duty and citizenship which lay in his own thought like sculptured fragments certifying some beauty yearned after but not traceable by divination' (*DD* pp.570-71). During this scene Gwendolen's broken language, her stumbling reminiscence, lies less 'like sculptured fragments' than like rubble around her feet. Deronda's job would appear to be, like Freud's early work as a psychotherapist, that of joining up Gwendolen's severed prose and to produce a healing narrative from it. In his description of psychotherapy in *Studies on Hysteria*, Freud echoes Deronda's efforts to recuperate Gwendolen's broken prose. At the commencement of any psychical treatment - which in the 1880s and 1890s presumes a hysterical nucleus in all patients - Freud describes how:

> the whole spatially extended mass of psychogenic material is [...] drawn through a narrow cleft and thus arrives in consciousness cut up, as it were, into pieces or strips. It is the psychotherapist's business to put these together once more into the organization he presumes to have existed. (*SE* 2, p. 291)

The underlying narrative that Deronda 'presumes to have existed' in Gwendolen's mind, has contrary effects on the protagonists. The joining up of the fragments of Gwendolen's story - however disturbing their content - heralds Deronda's liberation from the excitation which its presence in fragmented form had produced in him. For Gwendolen, on the other hand, it brings forward her embrace of a fate in which nothing but 'outstretched arms and pleadings made in vain' await her.

A more unlikely disciple for spiritual conversion than Gwendolen, could not be found. At the same time that Deronda is sharing the news of his Jewish ancestry with Mordecai, Gwendolen is observed to be 'undergoing a sort of discipline for the refractory which, as little as possible like conversion, bends half the self with a terrible strain, and exasperates the unwillingness of the other half' (*DD* p.656). After the drowning of Grandcourt, in which the heroine is convinced she sees 'her wish outside her', Gwendolen is conscious of fantasies within: as a result of her crisis a break between internal and external worlds, such that fantasies no longer move 'within her like ghosts', is finally made. The torment she suffers is an effect of this severance, and is exacerbated by her final separation from Deronda. On a psychical level the distinction Gwendolen is required to make is between unconscious unpleasure, experienced in fantasy as imaginative death, and conscious unpleasure, suffered as misery. There is, the author implies, no going back from such recognition. After it memory takes the place of repetition and guilt takes the place of persecution: nothing can be as terrible nor as wondrous after such knowledge is made known. Thus the heroine:

> lived through and through again the terrible history of her temptations, from their first form of illusory self-pleasing when she struggled away from the hold of conscience, to their latest form of an urgent hatred dragging her towards its satisfaction, while she prayed and cried for the help of that conscience which she had forsaken. (*DD* pp.866-67)

Movement all but ceases at the end of this novel, as Gwendolen is plunged into the agonies of a mental state which on a spiritual level is akin to rebirth. The narrative is less broken up and less visionary after this struggle: the loss sustained by the heroine is borne out in the measured tread of the prose. In the manuscript of the novel 'a great wave of shock passed through Gwendolen' at this time; a tremor which in the first edition is altered to 'a great wave of remembrance' (*DD* p.876). Understanding, it would seem, has finally achieved the upper hand in this adventure of the soul, in which hysterical dread is finally transformed into recollection.

And yet is it? What exactly is it that Gwendolen has understood, apart from the significance of powers greater than the sum of her ego? Is it, after all, shock or remembrance that shudders through the heroine in the closing scene of a novel which begins, as it ends, *in medias res*? Are we to suppose that a spoilt girl, a woman whose satisfactions urge her toward their negative fulfilment, has undergone a spiritual transformation such that the anxiety and 'lawlessness' which is so much a feature of her presentation, is finally subdued by a conscious recounting of 'the terrible history of her temptations'? On a psychical plane such a recitation is impossible, caused not least by the lapses with which hysterical repression would mar it. Besides, in the second to last chapter of *Daniel Deronda*, the heroine is depicted in the throes of an attack of anxiety hysteria in

which what might otherwise be felt as mental pain, is registered as unbounded anguish. Gwendolen continues to suffer the effects of reminiscence, in which past affective crises throw up gaps in consciousness, rather than the effects of remembrance, in which the release of affects into consciousness reconciles severed ideas and affects. Far from achieving liberation, Gwendolen's psyche continues to be taken up with fending off ideas which align with incriminating impulses, expressive of a state of internal siege. In a discussion of anxiety hysteria in his case-history of 'Little Hans', Freud pinpoints the ceaseless psychical labour which characterizes this state, as one in which 'the mind is constantly at work in the direction of once more binding the anxiety which has become liberated' (*SE* 10 p.117). In belying the conflict which fuels it, hysteria ultimately fails as a means of redress, and this for the reason that it cannot defend against perceptions from within, being organized solely to restrain impulses already admitted to consciousness. Short of a withdrawal from the world, such as the one Gwendolen adopts in her muted return to her family at Offendene, the operations of defence are always a half-measure. Yet it is such half-measures that this narrative forwards: thus Mrs Meyrick sagely cautions Mirah, that 'anxiety is good for nothing if we can't turn it into a defence' (*DD* p.713).

Rather than an autonomy which presumes an engagement in and survival of psychical conflict, *Daniel Deronda* recommends, at least for the women who feature in it, the support of a guiding and ideally a priestly figure. Intimacy with an other who is capable of inspiring fear and awe is recommended as a counter to solitary experiences of anxiety and dread. Only through such a process, suggests the narrator, can conscience become active in consciousness:

> It is one of the secrets in that change of mental poise which has been fitly named conversion, that to many among us neither heaven nor earth has any revelation till some personality touches theirs with a peculiar influence, subduing them into receptiveness. It had been Gwendolen's habit to think of the persons round her as stale books, too familiar to be interesting. Deronda had lit up her attention with a sense of novelty: not by words only, but by imagined facts, his influence had entered into the current of that self-suspicion and self-blame which awakens a new consciousness. (*DD* pp.484-85)

Gwendolen invests 'stale books' with 'imagined facts' such that a 'new consciousness', synonymous with conscience and as such attuned to negative capacities, is aroused. As a result of this arousal, fear and anxiety attach themselves to a mentor whose influence both quells and stimulates them. The narrator describes how this phenomenon occurs in Gwendolen: 'her feelings had turned this man, only a few years older than herself, into a priest; a sort of trust less rare than the fidelity that guards it' (*DD* p.485). It is this 'fidelity' which Deronda risks forsaking, both in continuing his relations with Gwendolen and in ending them: even though the earlier attribute of spoiling suggests that no unbroken relations are possible for this heroine. Faithful devotion to

her 'priest' prevents Gwendolen from recognizing and redeeming her position: she 'could not spontaneously think of an end to that reliance, which had become to her imagination like the firmness of the earth, the only condition of her walking' (*DD* p.867). The heroine's dependence on Deronda finally works against the provision of autonomy and memory in herself; instead it promotes a division which situates goodness and redemption outside a self which is negatively conceived. As Gwendolen admits to Deronda: 'If you had not been good, I should have been more wicked than I am' (*DD* p.767).

While a belief in salvation is attributed to both Gwendolen and Deronda, Gwendolen's wish to be saved is more demonstratively anxious than Deronda's, whose appeal, as signified in his rowing and then drifting downstream on the Thames, is an openly wishful one. Whereas Gwendolen's bond to Deronda implies a split between conscience and ideal, with her ego shrinking in abeyance, Deronda's liaison to Gwendolen is expressive of suppressed yet still active unconscious desires. Moreover Gwendolen's hysterical instability suggests an earlier onset than Deronda's experience of erotic unrest; the gaps which result from her fits of dread appear more resistant to association than does Deronda's growing awareness of a gap between the strength of his wishes and their realization in reality. Underlying Gwendolen's tenacious dependence on Deronda is a paradox, which is that it is those measures which organize her hysterical dread and existential despair which also prolong the conditions which require her to employ them. The downhill run of Gwendolen's fortunes, following her defiance of Lydia Glasher, prompts an important question. Is the heroine's 'wickedness' an effect of equating thought and deed, and then remonstrating herself proportionately; or is this wickedness caused by a division which maintains ego and ideal in separate quarters, and thus prevents their conciliation. It would seem, in support of the latter, that Gwendolen's only hope lies in maintaining links to a superior mentor who will keep this distinction intact. At this point the narrator slips into an overtly religious frame of mind:

> It is hard to say how much we could forgive ourselves if we were secure from judgement by an other whose opinion is the breathing medium of all our joy [...] In this way our brother may be in the stead of God to us, and his opinion which has pierced even to the joints and marrow, may be our virtue in the making. (*DD* p.833)

While Gwendolen strives to restrain fate at every turn, by keeping secrets or hiding keys, Deronda emboldens himself at each juncture of a destiny which, in its slow unfolding, contrasts with Gwendolen's covert dreads. Deronda's longing for reverent duty is starkly different from the fear of wickedness and need for guidance which constitutes the staying of agitation in Gwendolen. Whereas Gwendolen is terrified of what she might do by way of errant impulse, and

seeks help such that she won't act on it, Deronda, who is able to subdue impatience and hesitation, can wait for purpose to reveal itself.

In the final sequence of *Daniel Deronda* the tables turn such that Deronda, blessed with rightful inheritance and ancestral memorials, returns to London wearing his 'hereditary armour'; a fortune which contrasts radically with Gwendolen's inheritance of a reduced income and Lydia Glasher's old residence near a gravel pit (*DD* p.815). Deronda, the young boy who queries his tutor on the surprising number of cardinals' nephews, is called upon to satisfy the dictates of a sacred creed. In this reversal of the Cinderella story, the Egyptian version of which Eliot noted in a notebook for this novel, Deronda rises from obscurity to revelation, to surpass his shrewd yet finally unresourceful 'sister', Gwendolen. In the end it is Deronda's faith in a universe that recognizes his claim on it that saves him; and equally it is Gwendolen's anxiety about finding a position for herself, where none is revealed, that thwarts her. Gwendolen's dread of fate, which derives from an alliance between a stringent conscience and a shrinking ego, contrasts vividly with Deronda's hopeful sense of destiny, which expressly solicits the open spaces and solitude - both objects of dread for Gwendolen - as preliminary to providential understanding. Psychical transformation is worked out differently in the hero and heroine of *Daniel Deronda*, being determined in the one by psychical responses which cultivate autonomy in a benign world, and exacerbated in the other by an arrest of psychical progress.

The nature of Gwendolen's fall is complex: in dramatizing her nuclear complex through intimate relations with others, the heroine engages with elements that she most wants and most fears within it. While on a social level Gwendolen marries Grandcourt and is spiritually 'adopted' by Deronda, on a psychical level she enters into relations with a sadistic representation of her most violent wishes and with a stern representation of conscience. Grandcourt and Deronda act differently upon Gwendolen: whereas she is stimulated by her husband to desire 'something my fingers longed for' - the knife, she is inspired by Deronda to yearn for a spiritual restitution that finally excludes her (*DD* p.756). Their combined influence brings to the surface something within the heroine that 'troubled satisfaction'; something which, expressed in consciousness, both bars her from youthful flights of grandiloquence, yet hinders her from pursuits which might overcome a phobic dread. Eliot's idea of psychical progress appears intimately bound up, at least in the feminine characters of *Daniel Deronda*, with moral recovery. And yet, ultimately, a moral recovery is something which depends less on an increased investment in the powers of conscience, than on a greater tolerance of the ego. It would appear that the complexities of *Daniel Deronda* derive from

something within the narrative itself that troubles satisfaction, something which the authorial consciousness - which is not identical with the author - cannot afford to know about itself. This troublesomeness, which surfaces in the narrator's moralizing asides, is none the less brought into the open through the breadth of this novel. In commenting on the conscientious rigours of science, as they contrast with those of creativity, the narrator reflects on the way enthusiasms can come to generate - and in some sense to undermine - all larger human projects: 'Even strictly-measuring science could hardly have got on without that forecasting ardour which feels the agitations of discovery beforehand, and has faith in its preconception that surmounts many failures of experiment' (*DD* p.572). This 'forecasting ardour' is as much a part of Freud's *Studies on Hysteria* as it is of *Daniel Deronda*, in that both works overcome the shortcomings of experimentation yet fail to observe its strictures. These powers of prevision explain both the problems and the successes of *Daniel Deronda*, a novel which pits itself against objects as dangerous and as beautiful as the 'long willow leaf in a silver sheath'.

When the reviews of *Daniel Deronda* appeared, Eliot was disheartened by the public's overwhelming interest in the Gwendolen Harleth plot. This is hardly surprising: however proportionate Eliot's attention to each protagonist is, it is the characterization of Gwendolen that attracts the most intense and equivocal elements of the narrative. However concertedly Deronda and the narrator turn away from 'the secret form or expression which gave the dynamic quality to [Gwendolen's] glance', it is this 'dynamic quality', which includes the heroine's impact on others and the phobic solitude she herself endures, which generates narrative interest. Although Gwendolen is a member of the Harleth family, she retains, from the opening of the novel, merely formal links with it. Like Eugénie Grandet, who is in fact and manner an only child, Gwendolen is abstracted from her family and as a result, like Eugénie, does not know her own value. What Balzac's and Eliot's narratives demonstrate is the way in which the value of both these heroines is confirmed by male protagonists: Charles Grandet and Deronda. Eugénie and Gwendolen fail to take up the paternal identification which their heirlooms signify, and are awoken to it only through negotiating the value each heirloom brings with its exchange. The tardy assimilation of gold coin and emerald, reflects a diminution of each heroine's value. This value depends on an economy in which symbolic value is inherited, not exchanged; and it is in the overturning of this world-view, such that value is exchanged rather than inherited, that these hysterical heroines are caught.

Like Lucy Snowe's psychical collapse in Villette, in which links to important objects appear momentarily to break, Gwendolen's phobic experiences indicate the precariousness of her links

to objects which initiated the experience of satisfaction - and therefore of value - for her. This precariousness is exemplified in the mirror scenes in *Daniel Deronda*: at Leubronn when Gwendolen looks admiringly at herself at Leubronn and contrasts her beauty with the pathos of her family's lacklustre fortunes; after the scene with Klesmer when Gwendolen's face, suddenly pale, loses its narcissistic sheen and appears to her as the reflection of another woman; and when the heroine unwraps the diamonds sent by Mrs Glasher, and her face, stricken white, is captured in the mirror above the fire by a third-person narrator. Compared with Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet* and Tolstoy's *Family Happiness*, Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* offers rich insights into the heroine's inner life, into those minute links without which Gwendolen would remain opaque. Yet it remains unclear, despite the creative methods supplied by her 'experiments in life', exactly what kind of 'forecasting ardour' Eliot set about writing this novel. What is the 'preconception' which Eliot, however unwittingly, sought to prove? Although *Daniel Deronda* expands to include many viewpoints, this expansiveness is not infinite, as its prefacing motive of vengeance suggests. The presence of underlying motives comes to the fore in the next narrative in this study, Florence Nightingale's *Cassandra*, in which the force of the author's 'forecasting ardour' controls the story in significant - and hysterical - ways.

NOTES

1. George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, ed. by Barbara Hardy (London: Penguin, 1976), p.834. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text as *DD*.
2. Letter to Frederick Harrison, 10 June 1879, *George Eliot's Letters* ed. by Gordon Haight (Yale: Yale University Press, 1955), vol. 7, p.161.
3. Letter to Frank Payne, 25 January 1876, *George Eliot's Letters*, vol. 6, p.216.
4. Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. by Marian Evans (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1893), p.5.
5. *George Eliot's Letters*, vol. 1, pp.239-40.
6. Marian Evans's relation to the philosopher G. H. Lewes, along with editorial work she undertook for the Westminster Review, brought her into direct contact with current psychological theories. The following description of the mind, taken from G. H. Lewes *Foundations of a Creed*, vol. 1, is illustrative of this context: 'The sensitive mechanism is not a simple mechanism, and as such constant, but a variable mechanism, which has a *history*. What the Senses inscribe on it, are not merely the changes of the external world; but these characters are commingled with the characters of preceding inscriptions. The sensitive subject is no tabula rasa: it is not a blank sheet of paper, but a palimpsest.' Quoted by Sally Shuttleworth, in *George Eliot and Nineteenth Century Science: The Make-Believe of a Beginning* (Cambridge: CUP, 1984), p.192.
7. A synthesis of memory, experience, and fantasy was hypothesized by the English psychologist James Sully, with whom the Lewes's were intellectual peers. Eliot noted Sully's *Sensation and Intuition* (1874) while composing *Daniel Deronda*, extracting from it the notion of the ego's displacement from a central position in consciousness. Sully elaborates: 'This interposition of a personality in every case of human conduct, though most convenient for every-day purposes, easily leads to the supposition that the action, viewed as a phenomenon, is strictly the effect of the whole individual mind or that the agent expressed by the subject of the verb is the adequate cause. This mode of thought seems to be specially countenanced by the forms of speech which ascribe to a person the act of choosing between contending motives. Such phrases are supposed to imply, not only that there exists quite apart from the processes of volitional stimulation some substantive *ego*, but that this *ego* has a perfect controlling power over these processes. In other words, people are strengthened in the belief that if motives are the proximate cause of an action, the conscious deliberating subject is the cause of the motives. James Sully, *Sensation and Intuition* (London Henry King, 1874), p.1.
8. George Eliot, *Middlemarch* ed. by Barbara Hardy (London: Penguin, 1980), p.358.
9. 'Leaves from a Notebook', in *The Essays of George Eliot*, ed. by George Pinney (London: Routledge, Kegan & Paul, 1963), p.445.
10. Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, pp.281-82.
11. Ernest Jones, in his biography of Freud, specifies that his subject enjoyed both of Eliot's final novels: 'Freud mentions reading [...] *Middlemarch*; this appealed to him very much, and he found it illuminated important aspects of his relations with Martha. Her *Daniel Deronda* amazed him by its knowledge of Jewish intimate ways that 'we speak of only among ourselves'. (Ernest Jones,

Sigmund Freud: Life and Work (London: Hogarth, 1953), vol. 1, p.191.

12. Pierre Janet, *Psychological Healing: A Historical and Clinical Study*, trans. by Eden and Cedar Paul (George Allen & Unwin, 1925), vol.2, p.1159.

13. Pierre Janet, *Psychological Healing: A Historical and Clinical Study*, vol.2, p.1187.

14. Pierre Janet, *Psychological Healing: A Historical and Clinical Study*, vol. 2, p.1154-59.

15. Hippolyte Bernheim, *Bernheim's New Studies in Hypnotism*, trans. by Richard S. Sandor (New York: International Universities Press), p.160.

16. In 'Leaves from a Notebook', *The Essays of George Eliot*, pp.444-45.

17. Adam Phillips, in 'First Hates: Phobias in Theory', quotes from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, in *On Kissing, Tickling and Being Bored* (London: Faber, 1993), p.9.

18. See note 6.

19. In *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926), Freud speaks of spoiling the child: 'The undesirable result of 'spoiling' a small child is to magnify the importance of the danger of losing the object (the object being a protection against every situation of helplessness) in comparison with every other danger. It therefore encourages the individual to remain in the state of childhood, the period of life which is characterized by motor and psychical helplessness (Addenda, *SE* 20, p.167). Donald Winnicott in *Family and Individual Development* (London: Tavistock, 1965) stresses the temporal factor in spoiling: 'Active adaption coming too late is called 'spoiling', and those who spoil a child are criticized. Moreover, since this active adaption to needs comes too late the children cannot make proper use of it, or else they need it to a very great degree and over a long period. Thus the person who is able to supply it may find himself in a very difficult situation because the child may develop a dependence on him that he dare not break. p.25

20. 'The Influence of Rationalism' (1865), in *The Essays of George Eliot*, p.403.

21. Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (London: C. A. Watts, 1937), p.304.

22. Sir Charles Bell is quoted by Charles Darwin in *The Expression of the Emotion in Man and Animals* , pp.149-50.

22. Sigmund Freud, 'Hysterical Phantasies and their Relation to Bisexuality' *SE* 9, pp.155-66.

23. Joseph Smith, 'Primitive Guilt' in *Pragmatism's Freud: The Moral Disposition of Psychoanalysis* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986) p.67.

24. Graham Handley, 'A Critical Study of *Daniel Deronda*', PhD London, 1962, p.443. See *Daniel Deronda*, ed. by Graham Handley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p.136.

25. Adam Phillips, 'First Hates: Phobias in Theory', in *Kissing, Tickling and Being Bored*, p.10.

CHAPTER SIX

'An old woman at thirty':

Florence Nightingale's *Cassandra*

> I thought I would go up to the Eumenides Cave, and ask God there to explain to me what were these Eumenides which pursued me. I would not ask to be relieved of them - welcome, Eumenides - but to be delivered from doing further wrong. Orestes himself did not go on murdering.1

So Florence Nightingale entered in her diary during a trip to Greece at the age of thirty. Like Orestes she would risk reason itself in her effort to understand the passions which gripped her: hysterical passions in which desire and reason clashed. Nightingale seeks to accommodate these invisible powers - 'welcome, Eumenides'; she would not expunge them from consciousness, an aim which characterizes an earlier, reactive phase of psychical defence. In grappling with these forces Nightingale appeals not to medicine but to myth: to a Greek drama which, in its ahistoricity, holds out explanatory promise to her. In contrast with the authors in this study who use literary narrative to dramatize a play of psychical impulse, Florence Nightingale appears to distrust the literary form as a means of representing thought and feeling, and it is this distrust which she brings to her reinterpretation of the Cassandra story. As Nightingale's only fictional narrative, *Cassandra* undergoes something more like scalping than revision in its passage from manuscript to publication. Yet despite this author's circumspect attitude to cultural forms, there is a distinctly literary quality to the character of Florence Nightingale; not least her conscientious desire to suppress a life of ease in favour of a life of moral action, to change the outward description of her life in the promotion of purposive aims.

In her description of Dorothea Brooke in *Middlemarch*, George Eliot comes close to a character sketch of Nofriari, the heroine of *Cassandra*:

> [Dorothea's] passionate, ideal nature demanded an epic life: what were many-volumed romances of chivalry and the social conquests of a brilliant young girl to her? Her flame quickly burned up that light fuel; and, fed from within, soared after some illimitable satisfaction, some object which would never justify weariness, which would reconcile self-despair with the rapturous consciousness of life beyond self.2

A combination of rapture and despair, of hysterical ecstasy and helplessness, is an important feature of both Dorothea Brooke and the heroine of *Cassandra*, Nofriari. What both heroines

share is a disdain for conventional satisfactions, which seemingly for them are no satisfactions at all. In each young woman the transcendent aspiration for 'some object that would never justify weariness', contrasts with a 'self-despair' that tends to subordinate the self to the ideals it venerates.

Akin to Gwendolen Harleth, who from the opening of *Daniel Deronda* senses an irritant within herself that 'troubled satisfaction', the heroine of Nightingale's *Cassandra* displays a refractoriness of character. This refractoriness, the outward crust of an inner conflict, has a complex and dynamic base which includes elements of psychical strength and weakness, along with those of masculinity and femininity. This trait directly influences the narrative fabric of *Cassandra* through the suspense and thrust it generates. Both Dorothea Brooke and Nofriari are depicted as headstrong; yet neither heroine directs the course of the narrative in which she participates. Nofriari, in *Cassandra*, characterizes her position in the narrative as, 'the story of one who has neither the courage to resist nor to submit to the civilization of her time'.[3] A narrative which tells such a story must always, on one level, be heard as a lament - and certainly Nightingale's *Cassandra* is no exception. The forbearance which strengthens Nofriari neither 'to resist nor to submit to the civilization of her time', is presumably a form of a hysterical resistance which develops out of a former susceptibility to hysterical attacks. The psychoanalyst Hanna Segal describes the secondary stage of neurosis, which features elements of resistance and vulnerability, as one in which 'the ego is strong enough to use defences but not strong enough to overcome the conflicts themselves'.[4] This secondary stage is evident in Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, when Gwendolen Harleth is described as being too clever for complacency yet too psychically constrained to exploit her advantages; thus the narrator refers to her as having 'both too much and too little mental power to make herself exceptional'.[5] This is Cassandra's dilemma also, both in the myth and in Nightingale's story; in all these narratives the spotlight falls on a heroine who makes known, through actions, speech, and internal monologue an extremity of desire and fear which disregards the consequences of so doing.

It is not immediately obvious why a heroine who is aware that something crucial yet intangible within her is amiss, and who falters in her identification and handling of it, should be a compelling subject for narrative. Yet judging from the wide and long-standing appeal of each text in this study, all of which employ this theme, an explanation must be possible. In a margin comment to her copy of Browning's *Paracelsus Aspires*, a youthful Nightingale writes: 'Pursuing an aim not to be found

in life, is its true misery'.[6] If an aim proves to be irreconcilable with reality, so this thought intimates, it is reality that is thwarting and stands in need of change, not the aim. This is the dilemma that confronts Nofriari, the heroine of *Cassandra*, who overcomes an intractable life through her passively triumphant death. In a margin paraphrase of this text, the narrator explains how 'Cassandra, who can neither find happiness in life, nor alter it, dies'.[7] The tragedy of this narrative is not that Cassandra dies the victim of an overtly oppressive social order, but that what afflicts the heroine lies within her own psyche. The desire for what Eliot refers to in *Middlemarch* as an unattainable yet 'illimitable satisfaction', combined with a conscientious striving for moral betterment, provide a constant goad for both Nofriari and Dorothea Brooke. Given these common aspirations, it is then no coincidence that Florence Nightingale and Dorothea Brooke should seek to open unorthodox communal orders for women, without vows, which would observe spiritual aims. The critic Elaine Showalter notes that Florence Nightingale never met the author George Eliot, but also makes the connection that Nightingale met Marian Lewes when the latter was editor of the *Westminster Review* in 1852; moreover in 1859, when Nightingale was printing *Cassandra* inside the second of three volumes of *Suggestions for Thought*, Eliot was sending off the proofs for *The Mill on the Floss*.[8]

George Eliot's *TheMill on the Floss* and Florence Nightingale's *Cassandra* focus on a feminine anguish so acute that their final scenes are catastrophic, despite the ecstasy which lies in their wreckage. The deaths of Nofriari and Maggie Tulliver occur in revelatory scenes which sweep up irreconcilable elements into a synthesis that subsumes every conflict, wipes out every grudge. Seemingly, once an immeasurable satisfaction which is unsatisfiable in life is renounced, so too - momentarily at least - is the suffering which accompanies it. The power invested in such a climax appears to derive from the heroines' refusal to subordinate the pursuit of 'illimitable satisfactions' to the practice of conventional feminine virtues. Maggie Tulliver, Dorothea Brooke, and Nofriari are literary characters, however their situations exemplify the condition of many educated women in the second half of the nineteenth century. Although it is evident that *The Mill on the Floss*, *Middlemarch*, and *Cassandra* all build up to an anguished climax, more importantly each narrative explores the conditions of psychical incompatibility that lead up to and ultimately require the imaginative extinction of the heroine. This incompatibility, between erotic desires and accepted modes of behaviour, between impulsive wishes and the demands of will, is in essence the same incompatibility that Freud would encounter and analyse around thirty years later in his hysterical case studies.

In various ways Nightingale's *Cassandra* is the most difficult, and exciting, of the narratives this study tackles the analysis of. Unlike the other chapters in this study which focus on the original edition of each text and ignore issues of the text's genetic development, this chapter on *Cassandra*, the narrative of which was never published as an integral text, poses formal, thematic, and stylistic complexities. Neither novel nor polemic, the unexpurgated text stands out from the manuscript of *Suggestions for Thought* in virtue of its crosshatched deletions and changes from singular to plural verb forms. Tucked in at the end of the second volume of *Suggestions for Thought*, nearly all the striking revisions of this volume relate to the narrative of *Cassandra*. Originally a mythical figure renowned for her gift of prophetic utterance, a power she receives in exchange for promised sexual favours to Apollo, the presence of Cassandra is completely effaced from Nightingale's published story - except from its title. It would seem that the decade of the 1850s, which separates the writing of *Cassandra* and its appearance in print, alters its author's views markedly. No longer seeking to ameliorate the condition of a single woman in pen and ink, the published author appears more interested in changing social conditions in general. Nightingale's appeal in print is issued on behalf of all women, and is much less a plea for the salvation of a single member; so that what is a vulnerable first-person 'I' in the original manuscript, becomes a stabilized 'we' of womankind in *Cassandra*. Similarly, following the advice of J. S. Mill and Benjamin Jowett, the title of the second volume, 'A Short Account of God's Dealings with the Author', is replaced by the modest yet didactic 'Practical Deductions'.[9] Thus what isolates the heroine Nofriari as uniquely dissimilar from her fellows in longhand, is common to womankind in print. In addition an Egyptian setting, in which the loyal Fariseo recounts the final speeches of his noble sister Nofriari, is removed wholesale, to leave a vibrant riposte on the commonplace yet no less tragic vagaries of middle- and upper-class women. In addressing the question of man's spiritual welfare in *Suggestions for Thought* the narrator's voice is strident and unwavering; only when it touches on the plight of the feminine members of the privileged classes does the prose style break - choking in places, bursting the banks of its stream in others. Evidently the author of twenty who conceives the narrative of *Cassandra* isn't the same woman who edits it at thirty; with maturity she appears to have aged in the psychical sense of forgetting those memories which help the psyche to withstand hysterical conflict, and is otherwise engaged in distancing herself from their traces.

One of the central questions of this narrative, and it is one that also informs the tensions within the feminist movement, is on whose behalf the heroine's appeal is made. In the manuscript

of *Cassandra* the victim of hysterical suffering is the heroine herself, with no appeal being made beyond the individual; only in the published version is this dilemma displaced on to all women. With this shift the dilemma changes, such that what is inexplicable suffering in one feminine subject becomes a defining condition of the female race. This change of focus constitutes a central problem, both for Nightingale's *Cassandra* and for feminism: for each takes feminine psychical characteristics which may develop independently of or in line with female gender, and credits them with the status of intrinsic female traits. Thus a propensity to cultivate secrets, to indulge in vanity, or to submit to terror, becomes aligned with biological gender, rather than with secondary psychical characteristics which feature in differing intensities in each sex. The sum effect for Nightingale, and more broadly for feminism, is that women are considered less in relation to their psyche than to their gender. And it is in this slippage that the analysis of femininity becomes grounded in the social conditions of women; with femininity being viewed much less as a response to desires and aims identified as feminine, than as a set of reactions to a socially constructed female condition. From this perspective 'condition' is taken less to mean 'a particular state of being or existence', than 'something that limits or restricts'; what the OED goes on to describe as a 'qualification'. This emphasis on constraint, on suffrage, leads to a conception of femininity as essentially negative and as materially determined, with its focus on those factors that prevent women not only from achieving femininity, but from attaining subjectivity.

An awareness that there is something amiss in the way men and women relate to femininity is thus conflated, in this shift from the individual to the social, with the idea that there is something fundamentally wrong with the condition of women. Responses to the latter claim generally take the form, as does Nightingale's *Cassandra*, of addressing the rights of wrongs of this condition. The inevitable result of concentrating on a material base is that attention is taken from an examination of the individual distress which promotes such an enquiry; a distress which is not easily absorbed into a study of those factors which qualify the progress of women as a second sex. Something is none the less gained from assigning agency for individual distress away from the self that experiences it, and on to a socially constructed notion of gender. Like the shift Gwendolen Harleth enacts from anxiety to phobia, and from dread to hate, hysterical misery - which in its severest form turns against the self that experiences it - is relieved by its projection on to external objects. Yet, whatever relief is derived from this movement, its effect can never be therapeutic, because in it the individual assigns the cause of his or her distress away from the self, and on to objects over which his or her powers are limited. To interpret the condition of women as a series of constraints, as Nightingale vehemently contrives to do in *Cassandra* , is to

rationalize as material and causal those factors which have a psychical base. In addition it is to rationalize the despair that underlies any such protest; ultimately it is to use reason to comprehend a capricious and intense emotional field. Although an explanation of this kind can be sustained at the level of formal argument, as Nofriari's speeches show, it yet implies an impotence; an inability to engage with those mechanisms of the mind which react in contradictory ways to femininity. As a consequence, the female condition is presented in *Cassandra* as a series of curses, directed against a sexuality which is externally determined by hypocritical social values.

The heroine of *Cassandra* does however make concerted efforts to trace the distress of womankind to its source, to a particular state of being rather than to a condition characterized by constraint. In this endeavour Nofriari makes a paradoxical appeal for the reinstatement of feminine suffering; specifically for a renewal of psychical pain which - if survived - promises an enlightenment that allows the individual to withstand, rather than seeking at all cost to avoid, psychical conflict:

> Give us back our suffering, we cry to Heaven in our hearts - suffering rather than indifferentism; for out of nothing comes nothing. But out of suffering may come the cure. (*Cassandra* p.208)

Rather to experience that out of which understanding might emerge, than to stand 'idly on the shore', watching opportunities, however provoking in their challenge, pass one by. Rather to return to the distress which provoked a strategic withdrawal, than to sponsor a permanent withdrawal from all excitement: 'better have pain than paralysis', this heroine asserts (*Cassandra* p.208). Rather to risk the chance of breakdown than to forfeit the opportunity for breakthrough, is what Nofriari seems to argue. Yet such an appeal is two-edged, in that what offers liberation to the woman who survives such upset, also pushes her toward collapse:

> A hundred struggle and drown in the breakers. One discovers the new world. But rather, ten times rather, die in the surf, heralding the way to that new world, than stand idly on the shore! (*Cassandra* p.208)

To invite renewed experiences of unpleasure is to absorb the repeated stimulus of a kind which, originally, overrode defence and triggered hysterical helplessness. Such a 'cure' temporarily poisons the psyche in order to implement a defence which wards against future breaches. The risks involved in such an antidote are yet considerable, as the Cassandra story bears out. One risk is that the woman will assume a reactive femininity, itself a form of prolonged hysteria. The despair that lies within the reactive response undermines its value as a defence, not least because it is heard as a protest by the audience that the reactively feminine woman most urgently seeks to address. This is the danger which Nofriari confronts, and is finally overcome by, at the end of *Cassandra*.

The same impulses which elicit psychical conflict, and are embodied in the Eumenides, are also a unique source of psychical energy; such that to do away with them in automatic defence is to suffer a loss in mental vigour. The effects of this depreciation are dramatized, in the margin of *Cassandra*, where the narrator writes that 'women are practically dead long before they are physically dead' (*Cassandra* p.226). This lack of synchrony between psyche and soma in feminine development is ascribed, by *Cassandra*'s narrator, to a sacrifice unconsciously enacted by many women on reaching maturity. The villain of the piece is not the suppression of any manifest wrong-doing, as Nightingale's allusion to the Eumenides might suggest, but the extended enjoyment of wishful impulses that originate in daydreaming. The heroine of *Cassandra* takes the meaning away from the spontaneous pleasures of a benign youthful fancy, and toward a malign panacea characterized by passivity and boundlessness. Ultimately it is the young girl's unsuppressible yearnings for perfect sympathy with a fantasied other which poisons her psyche, and blocks the transfer of these yearnings on to personal relations and moral activity: hence the experience of 'paralysis' so bemoaned by Nofriari. This heroine resolves to put an end to woman's perpetual day-dreaming through a life of continuous action, through sacrificing a life of thought and imagination to what she calls a life of social 'mission'. However the very strenuousness with which this aim is advocated hints that Nofriari is haunted, still, by daydreams that precede conscious aims. It would seem that the heroine's response to contrary impulses within is to subdue ulterior, unconscious aims by means of a conscious strengthening of ideals and standards.

Superficially at least, the young woman in adolescence daydreams while the 'old woman at thirty' suffers: the price of expelling daydreams from consciousness is a sudden drop in psychical vigour. What exactly is it that Nightingale presumes such daydreams relate to? Not to fame, nor even to ambition, instead to an 'accidental means of unrestrained communion', and this with an inestimable other (*Cassandra* p.226). In the switch from the first to the third person which occurs in the transfer from the manuscript to the published text of *Cassandra*, the entire female race is indicted in the narrator's rant. In this shift the erotic focus of a girl's waking fancy is reduced to a collective delusion of all women:

> Women are [I was] accompanied by a phantom - the phantom of sympathy, [warming me,] guiding [me], lighting the way [for me]. [It was only an idea, it never reached, even in my own mind, reality.] ([*ms* p.264]; *Cassandra* p.219)

To be inspired by what is ultimately 'only an idea', is to endure the humiliation of its remaining unrealized, unfulfilled. The phantom lover is always overinvested, for there is no external measure alongside which he or she may stand or fall in value. This finds a connection in Lucy Snowe's 'tent

of Peri-Banou' in *Villette*, an erotic and imaginative expanse which, 'folded in the hollow of [Lucy's] mind', holds the inestimable pleasures of a phantom lover within it, pleasures that - being largely suppressed from consciousness - are never realized.[11] Such reveries constitute a love-making in the mind which, inspired by perceptual memory-traces from early satisfactions, can rarely be bettered, much less beaten.

This phantom, and the reverie in which he or she is enshrined, is thus irreplaceable, except in so far as the dreaming subject is willing - as the hysterical Nofriari and Lucy Snowe emphatically are not - to create a love relation with an object that resembles but fails to mirror an originary lover. It is the persistence of such hysterical longings which explains Nofriari's reflections on daydreaming:

> [During all these fourteen years, I had been waiting for my sun to rise, the sun of a perfect human sympathy, the sun of passion, as it is called, not consciously looking out for it - our pride and our ignorance are too great for that - but unconsciously shadowing it in idea.] (*ms* p.264)

As long as she is caught in a reverie of which she is only spasmodically aware, in an ongoing engagement with a superordinate and unassignable other, the communicative drive out of which human intercourse and moral activity springs, is lacking to the young woman who extensively daydreams. Passed off by Nofriari as a form of emotional thumb-sucking, the inalienable gain of such fantasied relations can be surpassed only when the satisfactions they obtain are experienced as inadequate by the dreaming subject. In the heroine's view these satisfactions, in woefully many cases, are never displaced; a phenomenon she ascribes to society's disinclination to make available to young women satisfactions that have the capacity to rival the earliest satisfactions.

The heroine's polemical tone is just as envenomed when it addresses the matter of feminine virtues: Nofriari appears convinced that the same social conditions which promote virtues in the girl are also responsible for a prolonging of feminine fantasy life which in effect despoils them. The so-called innocence of young girls is in Nightingale's view largely upheld by parents, and particularly by mothers, whose memory of their own fantasy lives has been shattered by a reactive femininity. The young girl's virtues are thus doubly safeguarded: firstly by what mothers themselves can no longer afford to remember and to communicate to their daughters, and secondly by the girl's 'conscientious' efforts to annul reverie in herself. Through a false process of reasoning, girls mistakenly 'suppose that this day-dreaming comes through vanity, and try to subdue it by mortifying their vanity' (*Suggestions* vol.2 p.392). Like the practice of Chinese foot-binding, to which the suppression of reverie is compared in *Cassandra*, the consequences of

these 'conscientious' efforts are extensive. When the suppression of fantasy takes place before the psychical task of binding excitation for secondary use is well underway, the psyche's handling of further libidinal insurgences is limited. Besides, any attempt to suppress the exercise of fancy is vain for the reason that its motivation lies in striving for a stimulus more intense than that which can be gained, in Nofriari's opinion, from the pleasures typically associated with femininity. However vehement and prejudicial this heroine's vitriol may be, in her frustration with daydreaming she reveals something important about its relation to femininity. The problem is not that fantasied fulfilment of pleasure is bad, but that its fulfilment is short-lived, partial, and fails to lead on to more sustaining pleasures. It is because such fantasies are unmemorable, are not subject to recall, that the evocation of them is in Nofriari's view futile - the more so perhaps because the heroine's measure of psychical value would seem to be that of purposiveness, rather than of pleasure.

A perception of womanhood as a mixed blessing pervades *Cassandra* as it returns again and again to the subject of daydreaming. The effect of the following section of the text is unsettled by a shift from a first-person narrator in the manuscript, to third-person narrator in the published version:

> Women dream till they [And now I] have no longer the strength to dream. Those dreams, against which they [I did] so struggle, so honestly, vigorously and conscientiously and so in vain - which they do [I did] so curse in their time - and which are their [I now know were my] life, without which they [I] could not have lived - those dreams go at last [are gone]. All their [my] plans and visions seem vanished, and they [I] know not where - gone and they [I] cannot recall them. They [I] do not even remember them. And they are [I am] without the food either of reality or of hope. ([*ms* p.279], *Cassandra* p.)[227]

In the process of effacing her dreams the heroine loses the romantic ideas which stem from them; the conscious suppression of Nofriari's daydreams entails the loss of her erotic hopes. The suffering which results from this loss is experienced by the heroine as unpleasure, a distress which is compounded by her inability to remedy it. The struggle against dreaming ends, for Nofriari in the manuscript and for womankind in the first edition, in an extinguishing of both egoistic ambitions and libidinal hopes. Despite the psychical fact that without wishing, and the subject's future recall of those wishes, there would be no stimulus for thought, or so Freud claims in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, a book devoted to analysing the meaning and the tenuous workings of wishfulness (*SE* 5 p.567). The same dreams against which the heroine struggles so trenchantly, are with the hindsight of maturity recognized as the stuff of life, 'without which they [I could] not have lived'.

The extensive changes *Cassandra* underwent from original script to published version are

particularly evident in the opening section. 'The voice of one crying in the crowd, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord", is replacement, in the published version, for the narrative flourish with which it begins in manuscript:

> [The night was mild and dark and cloudy. Nofriari was walking to and fro before the beautiful facade of a Palladian palace. All was still. Not one light shining through the window betrayed the existence of any life stirring within. 'I, I alone am wandering in the bitterness of life without', she said. She went down where, on the glassy dark pond, the long shadows of the girdles of pines, the tops of which seemed to touch heaven, were lying. The swans were sleeping on their little island. Even the Muscatel ducks were not yet awake. But she had suffered so much that she had outlived even the desire to die.] (*ms* p.237)

In contrast the published version betrays no hint of a Palladian palace, much less of a mournful heroine who paces through it. Nothing of Nofriari's poetic sensuality, which becomes even more explicit in the next paragraph of the manuscript, survives in the final text:

> [She re-entered the palace, and reached her balcony; she threw herself down on its cold pavement, resting her forehead on the low balustrade, and her long hair, of the golden tint which the Venetian painter delighted to honour, bound with gems, radiant in the moonlight, fell over her bare arm on to the rough stone - but hardly for a moment could her energetic nature acquiesce in this humiliated despairing posture. She started up, like the dying lioness who fronts her hunters - and standing at bay, as it were, she bared her forehead to the night breeze, and stretching out her arms, she cried: 'God, to thee alone can I say all. God, hear me. Why didst thou create us, with passion, intellect and moral activity - these three - and place us in a state of society where no one of those three can be exercised?] (*ms* p.237)

Such a heroine would speak directly to God in order not to confuse her appeal to Him with a complaint to man; she would not tangle herself in social exchanges and the defensive postures endemic to them. Like the caller at the entrance to the Eumenides' Cave, this heroine does not accept her condition lying down; instead she stands erect, 'like the dying lioness who fronts her hunters'. Nevertheless lasting harm is sustained by Nofriari, such that her parting words are entrusted to the worldly Fariseo, who recalls his sister's demise in a narrative tribute following her death. This text does not represent a breakthrough for a hysterical first-person narrative voice; instead it communicates a brother's retelling of a sister's despair, as it featured in his conversations with her. However, on several occasions, when Nofriari falls silent in response to a 'reluctance of wounded feeling', the narrator fills in her lapses with internal monologues (*ms* p.245). All these elaborations, along with the narrative setting of a timeless and luscious Egypt, are missing from the published *Cassandra*. None the less this scaled-down *Cassandra*, minus its fantasy elements and its susceptible heroine, finds its way into the Appendix of Rachel Strachey's *The Cause*, a study of women's suffrage up to the beginning of this century.[12]

In a section of the manuscript which is deleted in the published *Cassandra*, the narrator Fariseo clarifies his position as spokesman for his sister's cause:

> [I am the brother of poor Nofriari, and I tell her story as she told it me, one day when I blamed her for not finding her happiness in life as I and her contemporaries have done; and she answered that I did not know whether her life had been such that she could either find happiness in it or alter it. I made some few notes of our conversation, for it occurred a short time only before her death - My poor sister! She died at thirty - wearied of life, in which she could do nothing, having ceased to live the intellectual life long before she was deserted by the physical life. I saw her on her death-bed [...] giving way to the tears and exclamations natural on such occasions [...] (*ms* p.286)

The reason Nofriari depends on narration for her story to be heard, is not primarily because she dies at the end of it;but because as a woman her life fails to be punctuated by exemplary deeds, and thus requires the initiative and framework of storytelling to comprehend it. The heroine's view of an ideal human life, as recounted by Fariseo, is a life which would not require telling because deeds would take the place of capitulation: historic events would supplant descriptive narrative, actions would have the edge over words. Thus if women 'were strong, all of them, they would not need to have their story told for all the world would read it in the mission they have fulfilled' (*Cassandra* p.218).

However persuasive this generalization appears in the published version, when Fariseo recalls his sister's speech on this question in the manuscript, a rather different effect is created:

> [I do not say that with greater strength of purpose I could not have accomplished something. If I had been a hero, I should not need to tell my story for then all the world would have read it in the mission I should have fulfilled. It is because I am a common-place, ordinary, every-day character that I tell my tale -] because it is the sample of hundreds of lives (or rather deaths) of persons who cannot fight with society, or who unsupported by the sympathies about them, give up their own destiny as not worth the fierce and continued struggle necessary to accomplish it. ([*ms* p.264]; *Cassandra* p.218)

To fail to stand out from society through the accomplishment of heroic deeds, is to be drawn to identify with a common herd that renounces singular aims. Literary narrative is the genre appropriate for those members of society who are groomed 'neither to resist nor to submit', and who thus require a representational form to articulate their position. It is not therefore simply an issue of women's suffrage that Nofriari would call attention to. It is not simply because these 'every-day' characters are female that they 'need to have their story told'; nor is it because their lives fail to be written up in bold deeds. Rather it is because women favour a passive stance after the collapse of their erotic hopes; a collapse they themselves conspire to bring about through reverie:

> Dreaming always, never accomplishing, thus women [I] live[d], too much ashamed of their [my] dreams, they think [I thought were] 'romantic', to tell them to [where I knew that they would] be laughed at, if not considered wrong. [So I lived, till my heart was broken. I am now an old woman at thirty] ([*ms* p.263]; *Cassandra* p.218)

Women renounce their dreams for fear of suffering the humiliation of their airing: maturity does not relate to biology but to desire; not to anatomy, nor to constitution, but to the erotic resilience of

the individual psyche.

Nofriari's complaint of premature ageing in women appears tied to the hysterical sense of being 'too late'; to the apprehension that the pleasurable object, and the psychical means to acquire it, are lacking to the individual who longs for it. As an experience it has an echo in the infantile experience of hysterical helplessness, yet it is all the more devastating for it highlights a diminution of the woman's psychical - and particularly imaginative - resources:

> ['Yes', she said to me one day, 'I feel that my Youth is gone. I used to laugh at the poet's sunny description of the May-time of youth, and say that *I* had never felt anything like that. But now I see the great difference between Youth and Middle-Age. Before, I suffered - but I always thought that I *should* carry out my schemes. I lived but for that. I lived upon desire, upon the dream of my hopes fulfilled. Now I see that I never shall fulfil them. I have lost the vigour of hope - the spell to desire - the sap to dream. I have come even to regret the enjoyments which I thought unworthy of me, even to pick up as I went by.] (*ms* p.270)

Nofriari's passage from youth to middle age is conveyed less as a progress from learning to maturity, than as a reversal from wishfulness to barrenness. This same sentiment is quoted - without attribution, at the beginning of Section V: 'L'enthousiasme et la faiblesse d'un temps où l'intelligence monte très haut, entrainée par l'imagination, et tombe trés bas, écrasée par une réalité, sans poésie et sans grandeur' (*Cassandra* p.227). Such a falling off of youthful ambitions may well be ascribed to flaws in the social system, if this dramatic swing did not suggest a psychical explanation. This latter explanation rests on the loss of a mythical satisfaction which is withdrawn from consciousness, and not on a young woman's reduced social privileges. Having renounced the hysterical desire for a perceptual identity with a forbear in the unconscious - that is, having given up all hysterical relations, the woman experiences a sudden erotic deprivation which is as unbearable as it is incommunicable. In this event, it is not surprising that Nofriari should have recourse to the imaginatively unthinkable, her own death, to represent this extreme suffering. Like Cassandra's death, with which Nofriari identifies, such an experience appears less to convey a passing away of the body than the sensation of goodness and love being extinguished within.

Just as women's hearts can be broken, so can their prose be disjointed: Nightingale mangles the manuscript of *Cassandra* for fear of the exposure that leaving it whole might bring her. The narrative frame is taken out, the heroine is expunged, and the polemic stops and starts - the latter in unwitting support of the heroine's claim that women are doomed never to make coherent use of their ideas because all their intellectual and artistic efforts are undertaken at 'odd times'. Uninterrupted time cannot, under such conditions, be given to any one activity, cultural or intellectual; nor, in an analogous way, can undivided attention be devoted to the elaboration of a

single idea. Instead the heroine's voice jumps from one idea to the next, planting the current sorry state of feminine affairs at the feet of one and then another cause: women's education - or more acutely its lack in any sustained sense; mothers whose hypocrisy stems from their own libidinal sacrifices; a society which prohibits proper intimacy and thus makes courtship a lottery; and a marital system which sanctions prostitution within marriage as a result of the spouses' ignorance - at the time of their union - of anything but each other's material prospects. In addition, novels come in for a considerable invective:

> [- The Novel - what a false idea it is - it brings two people through no end of troubles, to make them at last - what? - exclusive for the other - caring alone for one another - 'wrapped up', as it is called, in each other - an abyss of binary selfishness.] (*ms* p.167)

A 'binary' love which disregards triangular and thus social relations, is not only harmful, it is repugnant. More than this, it is vacuous, for the reason that on the whole women raised within a privileged domestic sphere have little of substance to offer their prospective spouses. Nofriari admits: 'Woman has nothing but her affections, and this makes her at once more loving and less loved' (*Cassandra* p.224). As a result of this impediment, and seemingly it alone, woman's love is more faithful than man's; a predominance which further skews the potential for intimacy between the sexes:

> The woman's passion is generally more lasting. It is possible that this difference may be, because there is really more in man than in woman. There is nothing in her for him to have this intimate communion with. (*Cassandra* p.223)

A woman's passion is more enduring because it is shallow, lacking the profundity - and the potential for dissension - which results from an engagement with broader, more complex issues.

Within a society that fosters disjunctive relations between the sexes everything is suspect: not least religion, culture, and education. Whereas for Tolstoy the main artistic culprit is music, for Nightingale it is the literary novel; thus it is Nofriari's opinion that the novel disseminates the same vain fancies as youthful reverie. Every novel, for this heroine, is guilty of cultural treason, for the simple reason that its roots are dug in romance:

> What are novels? What is the secret charm of every romance that was ever written? The first thing in a good novel is to place the persons together in circumstances which naturally call out for high feelings and thoughts of the character, which afford food for sympathy between them on these points - romantic events they are called. The second is that the heroine has *generally* no family ties (almost *invariably* no mother), or, if she has, these do not interfere with her entire independence. (*Cassandra* p.208)

The novel contrives to throw two people together in a way that society ordinarily circumvents; it then proceeds to bring out the best in their characters, and this through an absence of inhibiting factors, pre-eminently the supervision of mothers. Besides, the novel is always a romance because it aims to establish the illusion of the heroine's independence; a state which, given

existing social circumstances, in Nofriari's view is an absurdity. The logic of Nofriari's protest is relentless. While the sanctity of courtship is repudiated in one breath, the family is up for a whipping in the next:

> The family uses people, *not* for what they are, nor for what they are intended to be, but for what it wants them for - for its own uses. It thinks of them not as what God has made them, but as the something which *it* has arranged that they shall be. (*Cassandra* p.216)

The family warps its members in order to stoke its collective fires, which require a continuous sacrifice of individual talent to maintain a steady heat. The combined impact of family and social pressures on the female psyche is not fortuitous: 'this system dooms some minds to incurable infancy, others to silent misery' - a sentiment which Virginia Woolf quotes in her own polemic on female independence, *A Room of One's Own* (1928) (*Cassandra* p.216).[13] The influence of the family environment on a complex female psyche is itself conducive to unhappiness, for the reason that the contradictions implicit in society and family are particularly striking to the woman of sensitivity:

> The more complete a woman's [her] organization the more she will feel it - til at last there shall arise [will come] a woman, who will resume in her own person [soul], all the sufferings of her race, and that woman will be the Saviour of her race. (*ms* p.279; *Cassandra* p.227)

An apocalyptic vision thus creeps into the dying woman's speech: a heroine who more truly expires than dies at the moment of its completion.

A longed-awaited woman who, in overcoming constraining circumstance, would compensate the multiple sufferings of her 'race', is thus considered its 'Saviour'. This would be no ordinary woman, subject to the indifference of society and to the inducements of private reverie, but a woman who wavers neither in moral purpose nor in self-esteem. In *Notes From the Devotional Authors of the Middle Ages, collected, chosen and freely translated by Florence Nightingale*, the editor quotes at length, among others, St Angela of Foligno, St Teresa of Avila, Thomas à Kempis, and Jane Frances de Chantal, in order to advance those figures who are renowned for their propounding of an ideal. In her introduction to this collection, Nightingale claims that 'there will be no heaven unless we make it'; an attitude with which she enjoins others to the moral and spiritual activities on which, in her view, deliverance rests.[14] Throughout the nineteenth century, in Nofriari's opinion, those most lacking in enduring ideals were women:

> There is perhaps no century where the woman shows so meanly as this [...]. She is like the Archangel Michael as he stands upon St Angelo at Rome. She has an immense provision of wings, which seem as if they would bear her over earth and heaven; but when she tries to use them, she is petrified into stone, her feet are grown into the earth, chained to the bronze pedestal. (*Cassandra* p.228)

Who then is to provide the model for a Saviour capable of using her 'immense provision of wings'?

This is the question that preoccupies Nofriari and, in her failure to designate such a one, pushes her toward despair:

> The next Christ will be a female Christ - I believe. But I do not see one woman who looks like a female Christ. I don't see any one who looks, in the least, like her Precursor even. If I could see one, I would be the messenger before her face, to go before her and prepare the hearts and minds for her. (*ms* p.284)

Rather than seeking to be a Saviour herself, Nofriari would be her handmaiden; the heroine's wish is to serve a female deliverer worthy of devotion and labour. For all those women whose 'feet are grown into the earth', among whom the heroine includes herself, liberation depends on obtaining an identificatory model who would support an enduring ideal of the good. This desire is foremost in mind for any woman who is unable to live up to her own sense of the good, for whom the resources on which ideals rely have been reduced by psychical inhibition.

The heroine Nofriari requires something more than an orthodox Saviour; she seeks a feminine inspiration that would provide her with food 'for reality and for hope'. At the end of *Cassandra* Nofriari dies of starvation, not a starvation of the body but of the mind, a condition for which there is no social redress, for the reason that it cannot be observed by the society that incites it:

> To have no food for our heads, no food for our hearts, no food for our activity, is that nothing? If we have no food for the body, how we do cry out, how all the world hears of it, how all the newspapers talk of it, with a paragraph headed in great letters, DEATH FROM STARVATION! But suppose one were to put a paragraph in the 'Times', *Death of Thought from Starvation*, or *Death of Moral Activity from Starvation*, how people would stare, how they would laugh and wonder! (*Cassandra* p.220)

Just as in extreme hunger states the stomach lining starts to digest itself, in situations of moral want the female psyche turns in on itself and fights those very mechanisms that, in times of plenty, provide support. At this pivotal moment, one which is deleted from the published text, the heroine turns against her detractors for the last time. Philanthropist reverts once more to misanthropist, and the redeemer of mankind can barely be heard above the plaintiff cry of the hysteric:

> [Oh! Call me no more Nofriari, call me Cassandra. For I have preached and prophesied in vain. I have gone about crying all those many years, Wo to the people! And no-one has listened or believed. And now I cry, Wo to myself! For upon me destruction has come.] (*ms* p.271)

Nofriari dies as a result of society's non-observance of her prophecies, from a species of neglect. Such an outcome is distinct from a death that results from a life of social notoriety, or indeed from a passive feminine compliance which wears the psyche down through its respect for overscrupulous standards. Nofriari is struck down because her warnings go unheeded, causing her to embrace the fate of Cassandra; an embrace through which, at an identificatory level, she experiences a welcome release.

It is telling that Nightingale's heroine Nofriari, who in her dying moments identifies with Cassandra - the archetypal victim of hysterical suffering - neither takes her own life nor has her life taken from her. Among Nofriari's last words, removed from the published text, is the declaration:

> [The glory has departed. The life has gone out of me. I recognize my existence but by suffering.]10

There is no assailant, only a painful condition which signals the transformation of youthful daydreaming into mature feminine suffering. What was once a life of concealed pleasures, undertaken in a solitude which is deaf to social dictates, has become crossed through with a misery that bears no quality, no narrative, just an incommunicable 'suffering'. Nightingale's *Cassandra* thus exemplifies the hysteric's dilemma: morally liable if she enjoy pleasures her ego considers unpardonable, yet emotionally deprived if she shuns activities motivated by the desire for pleasure. It is the tragedy of the woman who would seek prophetic powers and yet maintain her femininity that, in pursuing her destiny, she finds herself up against an alterable fate: 'neither to find happiness in [life] nor alter it' (*ms* p.286).

However melodramatic this heroine's demise, it is yet figured in Nightingale's private writings. In a notebook of 1847-49, Nightingale writes:

> There are Private Martyrs as well as burnt or drowned ones. Society of course does not know them; and Family cannot, because our position to one another in our families is, and must be, like that of the Moon to the Earth. The Moon revolves round her, moves with her, never leaves her. Yet the Earth never sees but one side of her; the other side remains for ever unknown.15

These 'Private Martyrs', whose invisibility is an effect of the occlusion that family and society projects on their members, suffer more cruelly than do public martyrs. But such heated claims demand caution. After all, what precisely is the author's motivation for writing a narrative called *Cassandra*, privately distributed to six eminent public men, including J. S. Mill and W. E. Nightingale? What is the exact relation between a story about a martyr whose prophecies consume her, and an author whose sufferings condemn her to a life which, although insufferable on a daily basis, is yet not fatal? What underlying purpose does *Cassandra* serve its author? Is a heroine who would demand a life of epic heroism for herself, achieve fulfilment or martyrdom in a melodramatic death? By whose hand does Nofriari die, society's collective hand or the author's own purple pen? Is not the private printing of *Cassandra* inside the compendious *Suggestions for Thought*, akin to the pinning of the Queen's love letter beneath the mantelpiece in Poe's 'The Purloined Letter'? Does it not also share something with the suicide note which Dora leaves out for her parent's, inside her desk, in Freud's *A Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*? The narrative of *Cassandra*, written ten years before the publication of *Suggestions for Thought*, is no

artless tale; whatever other aims it satisfies, it is foremost a communication to interested parties. Although Nofriari purports to address God in her appeal, the author is elsewhere ready to admit that any recourse to religion implicates the family: 'the two questions of religion and family are so intimately connected that to ask concerning the higher power or powers acknowledged in heaven and on earth is one'. And on the same page of *Suggestions for Thought*: 'the two questions concerning the relation to God and the relation to the parent are one' (*Suggestions* vol. 2, p.245). Moreover, in the middle of a private note, in which Nightingale braces herself to separate formally from her family, she writes that 'there are knots which are Gordion and can only be cut'.[14] What better way to sever affective ties with one's family is there, than to write a narrative that melodramatizes the risk of not doing so? In the narrative of *Cassandra* it would seem that the author projects an internal conflict, originating in relations to family, on to a mythological scenario which serves to obscure these family links. Besides it is not without interest that Florence's sister Parthenope's first novel *Stone Edge*, written under her married name of Lady Frances Verney, boasts a heroine called Cassandra.[16]

Nightingale appears to use the myth of Cassandra to impress herself with an imaginative vision of premature death, and thus to awaken her desire for a life beyond the family. Her primary aim is to shock herself out of vain protestings, rather than to alert others of any suicidal intents. The myth of Cassandra has the function of a nightmare for this author - terrifying, prophetic, and in some ultimate and unthinkable sense, pleasurable. In it Nightingale moves away from a family romance projectively played out through dramatizing the relations between family members, as occurs in many realist novels, and instead stages the conflict within the psyche itself. The drama of *Cassandra* is that of an ego living under siege, susceptible to the contrary demands of an emphatic conscience and errant impulses. The danger it highlights is that of a psyche, drained of impetus, which is dominated by the logic of passive renunciation. Thus the only desires consciously expressed by Nofriari are those which are manifest in dread. What the heroine seems most to dread is being drawn further into a society which requires her to identify with a mother who, from a hysterical viewpoint, appears devoid of value; a society which requires one to stand 'idly on the shore', watching others play. The underlying fear is that in respecting a passive femininity which aims to satisfy the pleasures of others, one's own aspirations and pleasures are apt to 'drown in the breakers'. The panic which surrounds this fear is ultimately that of being found wanting as an object of pleasure, both to oneself and to others. It is noticeable that in the Greek myth Cassandra pleases no one: neither herself, Apollo, Agamemnon, and least of all

Clytemnestra. Who then is it that Nightingale's heroine fears the displeasure - yet ultimately the pleasure - of?

What Nofriari objects to, and heatedly, is a social system which infantalizes the mature daughter who neither flees her family in revolt, nor attempts to displace it through a strategic marriage. Yet this heroine protests too much. The heroine's polemic is compelling for its reliance on an oppositional dialectic, such that what releases satisfaction in one part of the psyche entails its exclusion in another. Accordingly the erotic choices available to a young woman are, in Nofriari's opinion, mutually exclusive:

> [I felt that I must choose, either to hold myself ready to sacrifice, *if* called upon, feelings, religious, social, political (but when these were all gone, there would not be much of me left) or I must sacrifice love and marriage. I preferred the latter.] (*ms* p.266)

Contradictory relations hold in the sphere of courtship, and by extension in all social relations: in every situation touched by self-interest whatever falls outside it suffers from neglect. Yet however sincere this heroine's apprehensions, they also have the function of masking competing interpretations. If Nightingale's heroine feels undervalued by the family, neglected by society, and at odds with the courting practices of her times, she also shows every sign of being threatened by internal forces which are refused a place in consciousness. Like Lucy Snowe's determined efforts to win back the love of Monsieur Paul in *Villette*, Nofriari suffers the effects of being passed over in love. This is evident in the manuscript, when multiple scratchings out obscure the recounting of this incident:

> [Oh!] How cruel are the revulsions which high-minded women suffer. [I remember, at the ruins of Palymra, amid the wrecks of worlds and palaces and temples, thinking of] (There was) one who [I had] loved in connection with great deeds, noble thoughts, devoted feelings. She [I] saw the man again. (They met again after an interval.) It was at one of those crowded parties of Civilization which we call Society. His only careless passing remark was, 'The buzz tonight is like a manufactory'. [Yet that man loved me still.] (Yet he loved her.) ([*ms* p.278]; *Cassandra* p.226; square brackets = ms; round brackets = published amendations)

Here the heroine's dilemma is less that of a prophetic utterance spoken in vain than that of emotional humiliation. Such are the 'cruel revulsions' this woman must suffer, as long as she refrains from unfeminine reactions of protest or revenge.

Even woman's involvement in good works such as nursing - in which impulses are channelled into social activity rather than inward into suffering, is suspected by the society that stands to gain from it. In *Notes on Nursing: What it is and What it is Not*, Nightingale's most widely read publication, the authorial voice admonishes: 'It seems a commonly received idea among men, and even among women themselves, that it requires nothing but a disappointment in love, or

incapacity in other things, to turn a woman into a good nurse'.[17] The tone is anecdotal but the sentiment is sincere; it suggests that an experience of libidinal suffering may increase one's sensitivity to the suffering of others and so, by way of exaggeration, encourage misanthropy to give way to philanthropy. In *Cassandra* Nofriari's speeches confirm the secondary benefits of caring for others, when she commends the increased levels of activity, sustained concentration, and positively-inflected moods that such activities generate. However the underlying aim - as opposed to the consequences - of caring beyond the self, is to deflect the female psyche away from an experience of personal loss. In Freud's and Breuer's early work in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) the following conclusions, focusing on the psychical effects of private nursing, are drawn:

> There are good reasons for the fact that sick-nursing plays such a significant part in the prehistory of cases of hysteria. A number of the factors at work in this are obvious: the disturbance of one's physical health arising from interrupted sleep, the neglect of one's own person, the effect of constant worry on one's vegetative functions. But, in my view, the most important determinant is to be looked for elsewhere. Anyone whose mind is taken up by the hundred and one tasks of sick-nursing which follow one another in endless succession over a period of weeks and months will, on the one hand, adopt a habit of suppressing every sign of his own emotions, and on the other, will soon divert his attentions away from his own impressions, since he has neither time nor strength to do justice to them. Thus he will accumulate a mass of impressions which are capable of affect, which are hardly sufficiently perceived and which, in any case, have not been weakened by abreaction. (*SE* 2, pp.161-62)

By exerting herself away from 'a mass of impressions which are capable of affect', the nurse paradoxically attaches herself to them more fully; for the activities of nursing give her neither time nor energy to absorb their exciting affect. By focusing attention away from herself, the nurse - or, metaphorically, the hysterical woman - thus encourages a reactive femininity; for in not responding to the cumulative affects of her caring, their influence on her character and behaviour are all the more determining.

When the heroine of *Cassandra* draws herself up to declare the fate of her 'race', the contrast between a first-person protest in the manuscript and the third-person narration in the final text is a marked one:

> [Oh!] Miserable fate of [the] women [woman]! It seems [to me, when I hear that eternal wind sighing and lamenting I know not where] as if the female spirit of the world were mourning everlastingly, over blessings - *not* lost, but which she has never had, - and which, in her discouragement, she feels that she never will have, they are so far off. ([*ms* p.279]; *Cassandra* p.227)

Although the object of the woman's longing is enigmatic, no mystery surrounds the affective longing with which such objects are 'blessed'. It is not that Nightingale's heroine is wrong in her prophecies, more that she is mistaken in the object of her vehemence - patriarchal values - and in her heightened sense of danger. As distinct from the classical myth of Cassandra, which ends with the prophetess being slain by a hypocritical and ruthless Clytemnestra, Nightingale's

Cassandra dies by no one's hand, with 'her mourners' in attendance. Unlike the original Cassandra, whose words are destined to be carried to the winds, Nofriari's words are communicated to the world by a brother newly sensitized to his sister's cause. The tone of the closing scene may be mournful, but its ecstasy is unconcealed:

> [She lay for some time silent. Then starting up and standing upright - for the first time for many months, she stretched out her arms and cried,] 'Free - free - oh! divine freedom, art thou come at last? Welcome, beautiful death!' [She fell forward on her face. She was dead.] ([*ms* p.]; *Cassandra* p.232)

Whatever the status of this ending in literary terms, the pitch of the dying woman's final moments is remarkable for its blend of pleasure and pathos. In it every conflict falls away, no hesitation jars the heroine's speech, and joy peaks in an easeful death.

The tragedy of Cassandra, and of all those hysterics - including Nofriari - who would model themselves on her, is that her prophetic cry is interpreted by her audience as an attack on society. The figure of Cassandra is a caricature of the creative writer, in that instead of directing her words out on to the world, she receives them back on to herself, transformed by an impotence. Nofriari's suffering indicates the persistence of affects which, having attached themselves to reminiscences, cannot be recalled as memories - except in a heavily censored or distorted form. Instead they endure in hysterically dissociated states such as melancholy, humiliation, and apprehension. The only way out for Nofriari, besides a projectively enacted suicide, would involve going back to memories which once caused a hysterical response, but his time with the aim of absorbing rather than repudiating them. This opportunity is not open to Nofriari, who is given the contrastive attributes of perceptual acuity and impotence by this author: 'Such an one [sic] sees the veil they do not see, and yet has no power to discover the remedy for it' (*Cassandra* p.205). To return to hysterical memories, rather than leaping forward to an imaginative apocalypse, would involve withdrawing the external models on to which a hystericized family romance has been projected, and aligning them with psychical counterparts, in relation to which their rival claims may be assessed. Such a procedure is closed to Nofriari, perhaps for the reason that insufficient psychical resources for such a process exist. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud points out that the psyche only knowingly submits to the experience of unpleasure - which the return to hysterical memories inevitably involves - if it can deal with any distress it might generate: 'the secondary system can only cathect an idea if it is in a position to inhibit any development of unpleasure that may proceed from it' (*SE* 5 pp.600-01). Should the psyche be diminished in its resources, such as occurs after a prolonged reliance on secondary defences, the risk to the psyche increases proportionately. The tragedy of Cassandra and of those women who, like her, 'see the evil' that others 'do not see', is that their foresight is gained at the expense of the

strength required for acting upon it.

Any permanent liberation from hysteria involves a paradox: instead of a progress forward it means risking a return to a hysterical response, but this time with the aim of overcoming it. Nightingale's heroine risks this return, but with little hope of success. This is a heroine who experiences herself as singled out, both for her perceptual acuity and for her impotence: 'Such an one [sic] sees the veil they do not see, and yet has no power to discover the remedy for it' (*Cassandra* p.205). Of course *Cassandra* is finally no suicide note but a hysterical narrative; one which for dramatic purposes assumes a beginning, a middle, and an end, yet inevitably - because of the heroine's yearnings for an 'accidental means of unrestrained communion' - is merely a sequel to an unending tale. Nofriari's lament is to be distinguished from the narrative which presents it: the hysteric is no novelist, nor can be. Rather than passively absorbing an experience of unpleasure of which consciousness remains ignorant, a condition Freud will make a characteristic of the death drives, Nightingale chooses the noisy path of narrative - with all its digressions, interruptions, and stylistic demands. This noisy narrative path contrasts with the path leading directly to a perceptual identity, which in this story is that of Cassandra's suicide; for the aim of narrative is to forestall a revelation until the point at which the psyche may profit from it, rather than suffer harm by it. From this perspective *Cassandra* is an elaborate literary hoax; one which is as genuine in its appeal as it is hollow in its purpose. As an appeal it remains ambiguous, the more so because the author effaces those narrative elements which might have provided formal support for a sustained novel. More of a sketch than a novel, the original version of *Cassandra* enacts, in its author's offer and then withdrawal of important elements of the text, an exercise in an imaginative 'might have been'.

NOTES

1. Florence Nightingale's Diary, 4 June 1850. Quoted by Donald R. Allen, in 'Florence Nightingale: Toward a Psychohistorical Interpretation', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Summer 1975, no. 6, pp.23-54, p.30.
2. George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, ed. by Barbara Hardy (London: Penguin, 1980), p.25.
3. *Suggestions for Thought and Cassandra*, edited by Mary Poovey, (London: Chatto and Pickering, 1992), p.209. Further references to this recent edition of the text are given after quotations in the text as *Cassandra*.
4. Hanna Segal, 'The Achievement of Ambivalence', *Common Knowledge*, Spring 1992, pp.92-103.
5. George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, ed. by Barbara Hardy (London: Penguin, 1980), p.667
6. Quoted in Ida Beatrice O'Malley, *Florence Nightingale 1820-1856: A Study of her Life down to the End of the Crimean War* (London: Thornton Butterworth), p.43.
7. *Suggestions for Thought* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1860), vol. 2, p.410. Further references to the first edition are given after quotations in the text as *Suggestions*.
8. Elaine Showalter, 'Florence Nightingale's Feminist Complaint: Women, Religion and *Suggestions for Thought*',*Signs*, Spring 1981, pp.395-414, p.407.
9. Ibid.
10. Manuscript of *Suggestions for Thought*, British Library Manuscripts, Add. 45839, p.263. Further references to the manuscript are given after quotations in the text as *ms*.
11. Charlotte Brontë, *Villette*, ed. by Mark Lilly (London: Penguin, 1981), p.
12. Rachel Strachey, *The Cause: A Short History of the Women's Movement* (London: Virago, 1978), Appendix 1, pp.395-418.
13. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Penguin, 1945), p.106.
14. *Notes from the Devotional Authors of the Middle Ages, collected, chosen and freely translated by Florence Nightingale (1872-93)*, British Library Manuscripts, Add. 45841, p.17.
15. Notebook of 1847-49, quoted by Sir Edward Cook, in *The Life of Florence Nightingale* (London: Macmillan, 1914), vol. 1, p. 59.
16. Elaine Showalter, 'Florence Nightingale's Feminist Complaint: Women, Religion and *Suggestions for Thought*',*Signs*, Spring 1981, p.410.
17. *Notes on Nursing: What it is, and What it is Not* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1952), p.340.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Hysteria and After

Il existe des pensées auxquelles nous obéissons sans les connaître: elles sont en sous à notre insu.1

To be directed from within, by thoughts which prey on the psyche such that the psyche is unaware of them, is a feature of a reactive femininity. To be conscious of this controlling power, and yet to be unable to change its force or direction, is the dilemma which faces the marchioness in Balzac's 'La Femme de Trente Ans'. Whereas the hysteric is in the position of 'knowing yet not knowing' those ideas which most offend her consciousness, the reactively feminine woman - elements of which may also be found in men - suffers from the permanent repression of offensive ideas. Reactive femininity is a phase during which, as in latency, erotism is dormant; under its influence what is originally a spontaneous libidinal response takes the form of a reaction against it. Whereas Freud's hysterical case studies focus on a specific period in the patient's life, which is often that of late adolescence, the novels in this study span the heroine's early to middle womanhood. During this later phase what is initially experienced as a hysterical conflict, triggered by unwelcome stimuli and incompatible wishes, is taken over by the ego, to become a conflict waged within and managed by the ego. Whatever underlying provocations exist for the literary heroines in this study, such as libidinal and aggressive wishes, constitutional weaknesses, and external influences, the neurotic unrest which derives from them is issued by the ego. For each of these heroines, the conflict which determines her character and destiny is organized by a sphere of the psyche which puts defensive aims before those of pleasurable gains. Here lies the paradox; for whereas the hysteric is frightened by experiences of extreme pleasure into erecting defences against them, the reactively feminine woman is dominated by defences which yet bring a pleasurable yield - despite this pleasure being masked by suffering. When hysteria exhausts its use as a primary defence it tends toward a reactive femininity which exiles, and maintains a continuous guard against, troubling perceptions and memories. The absence of these perceptions and memories in consciousness can be inferred from the activity of thoughts and commands whose work it is to keep exciting stimuli out of awareness. As noted by Balzac's marchioness, it is those thoughts women obey unwittingly - without external prompt or command - which shape their perceptions, acts, and memory more profoundly than any external agent,

authority, or social constraint.

Liberation from external oppression is more straightforwardly achieved than liberation from internal defences: oppressive social practices may be identified and amended, while internal defences, especially those of a secondary nature, may be traced only with difficulty to their source. Once a response to a feared but intense pleasure has settled into a reaction against it, the paths leading back to the pleasurable memory become blocked to the movement of associative, satisfaction-seeking thought. As opposed to the hysteric's contradictory attitude of 'knowing yet not knowing', the reactively feminine woman adopts the position of actively and permanently refusing to know. In this shift, from a hysterical to a reactively feminine response, the so-called 'gap in the psyche' which Freud characterized as singularly hysterical, is filled in with secondary defences which are manifest in denial, humiliation, vanity, and disappointment.[2] For instance what is first registered as disgust by the hysteric is rationalized, by the reactively feminine woman, as contempt. The two principles on which a passage from hysteria to reactive femininity rest are those of longing and resistance. These principles, more than the psychical concepts of passivity and activity in relation to which Freud described feminine secondary sexual characteristics, explain the hysteric's movement from attraction to repulsion in regard to the loved object. The vehemence of the hysteric's rejection of the loved object makes sense in terms of her suppressed longing for it, which is expressive of a desire only secondarily organized into a defence against it. In regard to literary narratives in which a forward-seeking impulse provides motive force, the presence of longing is generative, transferential, discursive; in contrast, the operations of resistance in these same texts serve to unleash obstructive, hostile, and penetrating forces. Longing and resistance are twin and active responses: simultaneously present, in varying measure, in the same psyche, they are also found together in the one literary narrative. While the expression of longing implies a desire to tell the tale, to give away a confidence, and to sustain an intimacy, the workings of resistance impose formal limits over what may be told and, more specifically, over what may be given away in narrative form. Resistance and longing work in unison, the one as a guarantee of form and control, the other as an unsuppressible impulse toward movement and gain. Any lasting liberation from psychical defence must then contend with these two principles; hence the persistence and resilience required for such a challenge. Equally any narrative that would entertain longing and resistance, with equal intensity, requires a degree of control and flexibility that only ambitious authors undertake, and it is the author's handling of these elements that is, in large part, a measure of the narrative's success.

Beneath the cathartic cure lies the promise of a radical liberation, in which the release of painful memories offers the individual an escape from the rule of primary defence. However, as Freud soon realized, a cure which is motivated by a release from the reign of primary process and by no other aim, is an insufficient model for the treatment of hysteria. What George Eliot illuminates in her psychological analysis of Gwendolen Harleth in *Daniel Deronda*, and what Freud discovers in his therapeutic treatment of patients like Emmy von N., is that primary defences such as phobia play an essential role in the psyche. To take a primary defence away, for instance when Freud effaces Emmy von N.'s terrifying memory images of animals, is to fail to respect the purpose of such a defence, which is to ward off what the patient imaginatively apprehends is a far worse danger. The fear attached to objects in phobia has a clear function, which is to allow unthinkable or neurotic stimuli to begin to be thought about in consciousness. The therapeutic aim cannot then be to take the fear away through catharsis, or to intensify the fear by concentrating the mind upon it, as Eliot's Deronda advocates to a tremulous Gwendolen; rather it would be to elaborate the fear in such a way that it is taken beyond the object arbitrarily chosen to stand in place of it. Only then can the object to which the fear is fixed come to represent - rather than to substitute - that fear. The way in which fear can distort perception is acknowledged by Deronda, when he reminds Gwendolen that 'when we are calm we can use our memories, and gradually change the bias of our fear, as we do our tastes'.[3] In the hysteric's ear this advice is redundant, for its success depends on the mind being free from anxiety, and hence able to follow one thought through to another; and not, as in the cases of Gwendolen Harleth and Emmy von N., to jump from one fear to the next, and then back. What Freud and Deronda finally recognize through their contact with Emmy von N. and Gwendolen Harleth, is that in helping them their hands are tied, and this for the reason that the hysteric cannot respond positively to what it is impossible for her to absorb without resorting to defence.

The paradox of any form of liberation, an aim which presumes the casting off of internal and external constraints, is that its benefit depends on the individual being in a position of relative strength. This is exemplified by the hysteric, who consciously seeks a release from those same fetters which, on an unconscious level, provide a sole safeguard against psychical collapse. On an unconscious level the prospect of cure is perceived by the hysteric as disastrous, for it promises to take away the one sure thing which stands between a stable - if neurotic - psychical organization, and a potential breakdown of it.[4] It is not then remarkable that Eliot's Gwendolen Harleth and Freud's Emmy von N. would rather remain hysterical than risk dissolving a psychical

position which continues to be of value for them. By the turn of the century, Freud realized that the psyche rarely loosens a defence without the assurance of an equivalent gain on letting go of it. From this he established, in a speculative way, that the psyche refuses to loosen a defence if it anticipates - if only unconsciously - that a worse situation might follow the relaxing of its grip. Once the psyche has entered this stage of functioning, one which is adopted in hysteria and settled upon in reactive femininity, its preference is for the devils it knows rather than for situations and emotions of which it lacks conscious memory-traces, and the psychical resources with which these memories might be awakened consciousness.

The essence of liberation, as it informs the emancipation of women, is predominantly psychical and not social. The psychical liberation of an individual involves all the strains and tensions which accompany a change of position: from the position of object to the position of subject. As long as Emmy von N. and Gwendolen Harleth maintain themselves in the position of object, they continue to require the advice, guidance, and support of an unequivocal subject: Freud and Deronda. The moment Emmy von N. starts to ignore Freud's probes, and to resent his guidance, her shift away from the position of object and toward that of subject has begun. This shift is irreversible: once the psyche has admitted memories back into consciousness after a period of latency or of hysterical defence, they cannot be dispatched again, at least not in the neurotic disposition. Thus as the hysteric draws nearer to the position of subject, the stakes - and the stresses - inevitably rise. What Emmy von N. wants from Freud, in terms of an object-subject relation, is in part constituted by the psychical distance set up in treatment between herself and Freud, as well as by the intensity of the appeal she makes to him, and it is distinct from what she seeks from him once she conceives of herself as a subject. Exactly what it is that Emmy von N. and Gwendolen Harleth want from Freud and Deronda remains unknown, because neither of these transferential relations develop sufficiently for this demand to emerge in consciousness. None the less it could never be known fully, in its inarticulate form, for the act of communicating it would lessen the hysterical intensity which bars it from consciousness. Once the hysteric can articulate such an appeal for herself she is automatically less reliant on another to represent it to her in an indirect way.

All the heroines in these novels appear to enjoy - as do most of the hysterics in Freud's early case studies - the attribute of high intelligence. Yet this intelligence is countered by a form of stupidity, a wilful opacity, which is constituted by what the hysterical psyche cannot afford to have conscious knowledge of. Although Freud refers to his psychotherapy with neurotics as a form of

'after-education', it is an education of a special - and a far from doctrinal - sort. Freud's psychotherapeutic methods implicitly involve giving up the position of object, and all the resentments and grudges which characterize the pawn, in favour of the position of subject. The subjective position entails identifying with the activity of coming to know for oneself, as opposed to that of being told what to know by another. In his treatment of hysteria Freud ended up with a praxis which involved not telling his patients what or how to think. This open-endedness posed its own problems; problems which are not however exclusive to clinical practice. It is for instance noticeable that George Eliot's novel-writing career began with the concise and moral *Scenes From Clerical Life*, and ended with the unwieldy, inconclusive, and searching *Daniel Deronda*. Similarly Freud began his research into hysteria with the compact and competent *Studies on Hysteria*, and ended his formal case-writing with *A Fragment from an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, which is considerably longer, more modest, and openly speculative than the earlier case studies. George Eliot opens her literary career in search of a moral order that may be revealed and strengthened by her 'experiments in life'; by the time *Daniel Deronda* appears in the 1870s, her focus lies in examining the individual psyche, a psyche which is stimulated as much by the imagination as by the external world. Latterly Eliot and Freud spend more and more time, posing questions than exhaustively responding to them. In their mature work each of them appears taken up with tracking general operations of thought, rather than with isolating their specific content. Increasingly their aim is to understand how and why things are kept out of consciousness rather than to identify precisely what is defended against; not to establish what the hysterical secret is about but, once it is dynamically operative, to comprehend the function that knowledge hidden to the subject might come to fulfil.

Although Freud held firm to the role of erotic conflict in any formulation of hysteria, his explanation of hysteria as a libidinally-charged drama changed as his research into the neuroses deepened. This research revealed how the hysteric's original struggle over a love object is transformed, through defence and a subduing of erotic and aggressive interests, to become a conflict within the psyche - and, predominantly, within the ego. A parallel in the realm of literature can also be observed, in the change which occurred when nineteenth-century novelists shifted their allegiance from the realist to the psychological model of the novel. A romantic drama of passion, played out between realistic and clearly distinguishable members of opposing sexes, became altogether more obscure when these players took up positions on a psychological stage, on which the lights were appreciably dimmer and the character's roles and genders more apt to switch without warning. Literary historians often link this movement to the shift enacted by

nineteenth-century authors away from a social canvas, and into the realm of the individual psyche; a shift which suggests a simple transfer from the generality of the group to the particularity of a single subject. This simple move is deceptive, because not only does it involve a move away from the public and toward the private spheres, but also toward narrative techniques which are capable of representing an intensified psychical reality which results from this shift. Crime, sin, and success are very different concepts when filtered through the consciousness of a character who distorts a fear into a crime, as Gwendolen does in *Daniel Deronda*, or who immediately treats an acquaintance as an intimate, as Lucy Snowe does with Madame Beck and Monsieur Paul in *Villette*. The consequences of such a psychological shift in terms of narrative focus and techniques are extensive. In *Cassandra*, Nofriari spontaneously makes an attack on the bourgeois family over on to herself; the moment she accepts the impossibility of realizing her protest externally, she puts in train her own suicide. Equally, when Brontë's Lucy Snowe recognizes that the Nun, a hallucinated Madame Beck, is neither mentor nor rival, from that point the onus is on her to do away with the longed-for satisfaction which haunts her; hence her need to drown the representative of this pleasure - Monsieur Paul - at sea. These internal dramas can't end - except with the death of the heroine - instead they come to rest at a certain point for dramatic purposes. Once the struggle over the object has been taken inside to be performed on an internal stage, there can be no end to the skirmish it sets up, apart from a formally imposed one.

The only imaginable end to an internal struggle, in which what Freud refers to as a 'once more' of satisfaction stands to be lost, is a fight to the death. Certainly death plays a decisive role in the hysterical scenario as an apocalyptic 'too late' that ends all mortal pleasures. Those pleasures which the hysteric foregoes turn up in various guises in the narratives of this study: as nostalgia in *Eugénie Grandet*, as a ghost in *Villette*, as depression in *Family Happiness*, as phobia in *Daniel Deronda*, and as a suicide bid in *Cassandra*. All these transpositions have a common aim, which is to dispel an unbearable conflict and to give what is otherwise unthinkable an imaginative form which can be released into consciousness. When the Russian literary critic Sofia Kovalevskaya gained an interview with George Eliot, relatively late in Eliot's career, she queried the frequency with which Eliot's novels attain their climax in a death scene. Far from responding with offence, Eliot urged:

> There is some truth in what you say; but I'd like to ask you one thing. Have you really not noticed that it actually happens that way in life? I personally refuse to believe, that death is not more logical than one usually thinks. When a situation in life becomes more tense, when one cannot see a way out anywhere, when the most sacred duties conflict, then death appears, suddenly opening new ways about which no one had thought before, and reconciles that which had seemed irreconcilable. It has already happened

so many times that faith in death has given me courage to live! 5

These 'new ways about which no one had thought before', that require double negatives for their expression, have the opposite effect of a death-wish. In Eliot's scenario death is personified as a character - 'then death appears' - which plays a structural role in a previously unorganizable conflict. In the hysterical context, death is an alluring presentiment of a cessation of conflict. As a hysterical solution it is, however, no resolution at all. For the conflict that death is called on to solve is bound up with those 'most sacred duties', which are expressive of conscious and unconscious allegiances. When in the family romance and the fantasies attached to it an unconscious loyalty to a parent clashes with a conscious protest which finds its object in this same parent, the hysterical ego finds itself split by its contrary 'duties'. While this tension can be seen to originate in the Oedipal scenario, specifically from positive and negative Oedipal complexes, it is exacerbated by the differing aims of erotic and aggressive drives: the one to subsume and possess the loved object, and the other to explode this same object in order to be rid of it as a source of unpleasure.

Why this dilemma should be so acute in the hysterical scenario is explained by the hysteric's sensitivity to the fused nature, together positive and negative, of all intense psychical stimulus. When Deronda says to Gwendolen, that 'when we are calm we can use our memories and gradually change the bias of our fear', he states a truth. However as a recommendation to the hysteric it is useless, given the great anxiety that proximity to the exciting and fearful object produces in her. Faced with the fused nature of intense psychical stimulus, the hysteric spontaneously registers it as dangerous. The rejection of excitement which follows this registration reflects a delayed response to trauma, and as such is a primary defence against a threatening stimulus. When this response is repeated it forms a reaction which effects a total repudiation of incoming stimulus, whether or not it contains something of value for the ego within it. One long-term effect of this hysterical defence is to build up a reactive sense of goodness which is premised on the exclusion of exciting stimulus. The hysteric and the reactively feminine woman could be said to be too good, in the righteous sense, to be true to their own desires, for these include desires with erotic and aggressive aims that are excluded by the hysterical psyche as dangerous. When goodness in this reactive sense is elevated as a standard, and is abstracted from the mixed impulses which might sustain it, it becomes tinged with morbidity. This reaction is mistaken, for any attempt to avoid the fused nature of intense impulses, by seeking to rise above them, is futile. Such an avoidance of stimulus is fraught for the added reason that as a defence it is directed toward external stimulus, and is incapable of deterring impulses which originate within the psyche.

In Freud's early case studies of hysterics he often remarks on the high ideals they hold. In describing Elisabeth von R.'s character, he refers to her 'giftedness, her ambition, her moral sensibility, her excessive demand for love which, to begin with, found satisfaction in her family, and the independence of her nature which went beyond the feminine ideal and found expression in a considerable amount of obstinacy, pugnacity, and reserve' (*SE* 2 p.161). It would seem that all the human virtues, in excess, can have a detrimental effect on the female psyche: thus a girl's love becomes an encumbrance when it exceeds the domestic sphere, while an independence of spirit becomes a negative trait as soon as it oversteps a 'feminine ideal'. A number of these tendencies are shared by the heroines in this study, with whom Freud's hysterics share important features: notably Eliot's Gwendolen Harleth, Brontë's Lucy Snowe, and Nightingale's Nofriari. Far from being weakened by a neurotic disposition, all these female protagonists are noted for their determination of will and strength of conscience. Blessed with intellectual and often material advantages, these women present an enigma in regard to the suffering they also display. Not surprisingly, Freud resorted to explaining hysteria early on in his career as an unconscious perversion, for in these patients it was as if a desire for the good, in terms of the aim of a virtuous, happy life, was accompanied by a compulsion for the bad, in terms of a debt of neurotic misery. Even more curious, out of this debt of misery frequently appears another impulse, inspired a desire for the general good - that of philanthropy. Gwendolen Harleth is fervent in communicating to Deronda her desire to be good, even if - more often than not - this is expressed as her desire not to be wicked; while Lucy Snowe is sincere in planning to build up a school in her patron's honour, an aim which is reparative in spirit. Yet another impulse qualifies the intentions of both heroines. For as long as the hysteric's aim of goodness tends, philanthropically, toward the promotion of the good of the other, the psychical energy channelled into this aim is likely to be tempered by thwarted rather than inhibited drives. These thwarted or frustrated drives, being cut off at source and directed away from conscious fulfilment, retain their imaginative potency through their preserve in the unconscious. When these frustrated drives colour the aims of the hysteric, they are inclined to influence negatively whatever moral or virtue they appear outwardly to uphold.

In later life, Anna O., Emmy von N., Dorothea Brooke, Eugénie Grandet, and Florence Nightingale are all renowned for overcoming a crisis of womanhood and for involving themselves in philanthropic works. Acutely sensitive to the restricted compass of the social good, the heroine of *Cassandra* makes an overt link between a social desire to do good and a covert impulse to do ill:

> Peace be with the misanthropists! They have made a step in progress; the next will make them great

philanthropists; they are divided but by a line. (*Cassandra* p.230)

A beneficent relation to the world is in this heroine's opinion the progressive consequence of an antagonistic one: hate and love are, at least occasionally, closely proximate. But a more psychoanalytical reading can be gleaned from this psychical advance from animosity to goodwill. As Freud's research into hysteria continued into this century, his therapeutic focus shifted from the repressed content of patients' material and on to those mechanisms which keep particular material out of consciousness. Consideration had long been given to the pleasurable impulses responsible for early repressions, but less airing had been given to the antagonistic impulses within the ego which conflict with them, impulses which are yet responsible for the 'obstinacy, pugnacity, and reserve' that Freud encountered in his treatment of Elisabeth von R. (*SE* 2 p.161). One of the so-called discoveries made during this period, concerns the way incompatible ideas stay in a dynamic state of conflict in unconscious parts of the hysterical ego, for just as long as they are unacceptable to consciousness. The criteria for this incompatibility are not set down by Freud, although certainly the *Studies on Hysteria* suggest that for women one ready source lies in conflicting ambitions which, as set down in the case of Elisabeth von R., go 'beyond the feminine ideal'. Another supposed discovery of this period focuses on childhood, and reveals that the first choice of love object is, for the libidinally-inspired infant, always 'incompatible'; primarily because it is determined by desires for an object which, the infant fears, would first satisfy these desires and then persecute the infant for displaying them. A third discovery, and it is one which makes sense of the fixed secondary traits found in the hysterical case studies, as well as in the female protagonists in this study, relates to the combination of loyalty and protest found in many mature women. To the outside observer, hysteria is a rebellion that has gone wrong; a rebellion which goes wrong for reasons that cannot be observed. What can be perceived from the outside, the hysterical symptoms, can also be 'abreacted'; not so resistant character traits which, as an expression of unconscious loyalty, can neither be seen nor resolved cathartically. Whereas bodily suffering may be relieved wholesale by catharsis, mental suffering is relieved only temporarily by a treatment which neglects dynamic and intrapsychic factors. This process finds a parallel in literary narratives: whereas a satisfactory resolution of a realist narrative may be - and often is - achieved, the resolution of a psychological novel, whether or not it rests on the realist model, rarely reaches a clear and unproblematic end.

Freud's early work on hysteria concentrated on a mythical, untraceable moment, in which the affect and the idea attached to an intense memory-trace undergo separation. In this 'moment' the idea is repressed, with the affect being transferred on to another idea, compatible with the ego.

Although this explanation was adequate to an initial formulation of hysteria, it failed to account for the complicating phenomena of repetition, guilt, and resistance which sprang up during psychotherapeutic treatment. These secondary psychical factors, which are central both to the hysterical scenario and to the literary texts analysed in this study, required Freud's second topography of ego, id, superego as well as a dual formulation of the drives, to comprehend them. In addition, Freud's speculation on a potential 'beyond' of the pleasure principle, theorized in the 1920s but anticipated in the initial unpleasure-pleasure principle of the 1890s, helped to explain those mechanisms which at first appeared enigmatic, perverse, paradoxical. It is however not until 'Civilization and Its Discontents' appeared in 1930 - which in many ways is a sequel to "Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness' (1908), that the psychical and cultural implications of the dual nature of the psychical drives were made theoretically explicit. In this later essay, Freud points out that 'when an instinctual trend undergoes repression, its libidinal elements are turned into symptoms, and its aggressive component into a sense of guilt' (*SE* 21, pp.138-39). It was only when the reconciliation of libidinal and hostile impulses toward loved objects became a therapeutic goal that treatment aimed at the assimilation of nonconforming libidinal impulses as well as of fused impulses. Although the significance of this aim was not acknowledged until after the famously abortive 'Dora' case, when strongly ambivalent sexual impulses compelled this patient's flight from therapy, it is yet clearly prefigured in the earlier case studies of Anna O. and Emmy von N.. This same dilemma is strikingly exemplified in Florence Nightingale's *Cassandra*, in which the heroine dies of an incapacity to channel hostile and incompatible feelings away from her own person, yet remains free of bodily illness. It is also evident in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, where Lucy Snowe narrowly escapes the effects of fused impulses that threaten her during the summer vacation, and then deftly removes herself from their influence in the final narrative sequence. Eliot's Gwendolen Harleth is not so lucky: exposed to the author's seemingly negative identification with her, she is left to suffer the 'pallid pestilence' which comes closely on the heels of her 'hurrying desires'.

In the 1880s and 1890s Freud's work with hysterical patients homed in on a libidinal secret, the content of which the ego was unwittingly guilty of 'knowing yet not knowing at the same time'. During these decades Freud presumes that it is the ego's not wanting to know what in some sense it already has knowledge of, that makes the recall of intensely invested memories painful. Unpleasurable memories are characterized by their high sum of affect, and it is this which explains their tardy assimilation into consciousness. With their strong association to the automatic discharge of unpleasure, affective memories appear to require much effort to transform then into a

resource of the ego. After repeated attempts at binding these memories within the ego can slowly dissolve the mechanism of reflexive unpleasure (*SE* 1, p.377). Only when painful memories are transformed into signals for conscious defence, is the automatic discharge of unpleasure - on which the unpleasure-pleasure principle rests - overcome. The failure to achieve conscious or secondary defences threatens to reduce the hysteric to the plaything of unconscious or primary defences, which operate regardless of any gain or loss of conscious interests. The aim of therapeutic recovery is therefore the transformation of neurotic suffering, consisting of unmastered affects arising from a past trauma, into 'common misery', in which the experience of unpleasure is ameliorated through its representation in consciousness. In a similar way, the aim of any psychological narrative is to tease out the complexes of knotted feelings which threaten to stop the narrative flow, either by halting it altogether or by diverting it away from its affective source.

While on the face of it the issues of women's suffrage draw on evolutionary and social theories of the nineteenth century, a notion of sexual difference which has a psychical base is also vital to it. Just as there is no feminine libido, rather a libido influenced by the condition of femininity, equally there are no sexual differences - even physiological ones - which are not coloured by psychical projections deriving from the individual's progress from childhood to maturity. Women are sensitive to sexual difference because they suffer its effects keenly, in terms of cumulative inhibitions and resentments. As a consequence they are prey to a weakening of psychical vigour, attributable to the drain produced variously by permanent defences, anxiety, and neurotic apprehension. The paradox of the hysterical cure and of the hysterical narrative, is that ultimately it is only by entertaining memories and impulses the hysteric spontaneously registers as dangerous, that more resourceful and flexible defences come to be organized. The stakes for any therapeutic cure are high indeed when, faced with the challenge of fused impulses, a failure to integrate them entails their expiry as invigorating forces. Equally the risks for any hysterical narrative are great, if to subject the heroine to a range of intense stimuli, is to risk the short-circuit of a hysterical fate.

The psychical toll of annulling fancy as a motivation for pleasure cannot be measured. As noted by Freud in his early work on masturbation and hysteria, it is not the fantasies *per se* but the anterior ideas released through them, that are essential to psychical vigour. To suppress fantasy altogether is to suspend the impulses embedded within it; it is to allay and to divert vitality at its source. The effect of successful inhibition is to render the memory of fantasied excitements null. A direct effect of hysterical repression is neglect of the conditions necessary for the experience of

satisfaction, as it derives from a memory of a past pleasure, a memory of the effort expended in gaining it, and the excited anticipation of a similar pleasure. Failure to align these three elements leads at best to a firework of pleasure, achieved through reverie or hallucination, which is as exciting as it is spurious as a goad to future action. In his discussion of the passage of sexual tension into psychosexual ideas in the 'Project for a Scientific Psychology', Freud attempts an explanation for this impasse: instead of excitation working to prompt sexual affects that may realize specific actions, thus binding a perceptual stimulus to the memory of a prior satisfaction, the excitation withdraws on the threshold between soma and psyche, to become manifest in anxiety, depression, and forgetting. This movement finds its echo within hysterical femininity in the passage from youth to maturity, in which a libidinal response to an exciting stimulus becomes imperceptibly reactive, thus supplanting a dominance of libidinal by repressing forces. Imaginative daydreams, so longed for and yet chastized by Nightingale and Eliot in their characterization of Nofriari and Gwendolen Harleth, are thus intimately linked to the experience of reactive feminine suffering. Daydreams are always a mixed blessing because they are at once the trigger of psychical conflict, and a preliminary mode of erotic hope. It is a clash between imaginative desires, and those conscious values through which any experience of fulfilment must pass that explains hysteria. In his discussion of Lucy von R., Freud writes that 'it seems to be a *sine qua non* for the acquisition of hysteria that an incompatibility should develop between the ego and some idea presented to it' (*SE* 2, p.122). It is thus an incompatibility of sexual and egoistic aims, between wishes and intentions, that characterizes the conditions of hysterical and latterly of reactive femininity.

In a marginal comment to *Cassandra,* Nightingale's narrator notes that 'woman's inward development and outward activity do not keep parallel now' (*ms* p.279). Because what promotes pleasure in one sphere spontaneously demands castigation in another, the experience of hysterical and reactive femininity always involves a straddling of pleasure and pain. From a psychical perspective it is the success of her repressions which precipitates the hysteric's fall, sweeping in its wake even the solace of memory. For without the stimulus of daydreaming and of wishes incompatible with her ego, the hysteric has no sense of what it is she once desired and, on an imaginative level, continues to desire. It is less a case of remembering what she once coveted, than of a renewed vigour with which to make such wishes conscious - both to oneself and others - that the hysteric's recovery rests with. It is not so much what the hysteric wants than that she wants at all; it is less the sphere of demand than the sphere of desire that sustains, in hysteria, the most lasting psychical damage. This is the challenge that nineteenth century authors who

chose the psychological model were faced with: not of elaborating the social unrest which sparked the woman's movement, but of dramatizing an excitement and conflict which might explain the condition of femininity.

In Nightingale's *Cassandra* the mother comes in for the heroine's multiple attacks, while the father gets off scot-free. The father has paradoxical status in the hysterical scenario; being at the same time central and peripheral, he is addressed by way of ultimate plea or glancing aside by the hysterical daughter. The hysteric can sustain no proper intimacy with the father; for in her mind the father is dead, if only imaginatively. In the hysterical scenario the onset of depression coincides with the death of the father as an object of value, and thereby as a model for identification. Any identification with the father that survives this depression is covertly enacted, being carried out as a sidelong attack on a mother whom, the daughter supposes, would spoil it. The anger that results from being blocked from a full and loving identification with the father is instead transferred to the conscience, where it becomes manifest as guilt (*SE* 22, p.71). As a result, the conscience of the hysteric contains all of the severity and little of the compassion that issues from a paternal identification. The hysteric identifies with a father who is dead: in so far, that is, as he is a legitimate object of libidinal interest. And all the while she remains secretly in love with a father who no longer exists, with a father who precedes his proscription from the sphere of the girl's love. Love for such a father is always nostalgic, mythical, and unobtainable. Of course this father might as well be a mother, in that she too once existed prior to a ban of active libidinal feelings for her. All lovers who imaginatively descend from these shadowy parental figures quickly become phantoms for the hysteric, and all satisfactions they provide are experienced as illusory. To marry a girl who identifies, if unwittingly, with a forsworn father involves certain risks, given that such a girl identifies love itself with the father, and thus registers the disappearance of the father as the disappearance of love, as synonymous with an emotional death. This confluence has further implications. Like the virgin who would unceremoniously and unconsciously castrate the man who deflowers her, the hysterical woman would unconsciously enact the disappearance of the man - or woman - who loves her in a way that rivals her originary loves. The hysteric suffers, and by implication is compelled to make others suffer, to the degree she lacks consciousness of the damage sustained to her own psyche. Such a hysterical woman can - as in the case of Nicholas Irtenyev in *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth* - also be a man, for it is not gender but psychical motivation which determines hysterical relations.

While the hysteric's relation to the father remains largely secret, her relation to the mother at

least in demonstration is public: the hysteric's invective is directed less against the man who descends from the father, than against the woman who descends from the mother. The hysteric repudiates the woman for offering her nothing to engage with in terms of libidinal interests and egoistic aspirations, for offering her a 'nothing' with which to identify. The socially venerated woman, who functions as a model of identification for other women, appears empty of value to the hysteric, who seeks a more active apprenticeship to the world than the one such a woman seems to offer. To turn away from this woman as a model for identification is not, however, to reject her outright; for the neurotic psyche, being conservative to its roots, would not hear of such a thing. To turn away from such a woman is yet to maintain a relation, however petulant and tenuous, with her. For by consciously turning away from this woman in disappointment, the hysteric unconsciously turns toward her with desire. The hysteric maintains a relation with this desired but hated woman, a relation all the more abiding for the opposition on which it rests. The woman's enigmatic 'nothing' becomes the object of the hysteric's conscious repudiation and unconscious veneration, and it is on this vacancy that every hysterical relation rests. The hysteric's antagonism thus has deep roots, for it goes back to the appeal the small girl and boy make to the mother in the Oedipal phase, and to the confusion which can arise from it. For although the hysteric wants what the mother already has, an essential and loving relation to the father, she finds it impossible to aspire - much less to identify - with what the mother appears to her to be, which is a kind of nothing. This hysterical dilemma surfaces when the girl, under pressure of conflicting loyalties, invests the object of her desires yet fails to integrate the feminine drives with which she may successfully attain them. In extreme cases this arrangement, such as occurs in Lucy Snowe's breakdown in *Villette*, may end in hysterical paralysis.

One consequence of these psychical moves is that the hysteric assumes her femininity is of value only to the degree she subordinates her own desires to those of others. In this shift, the pleasure or well-being of the other comes to function as an index of the hysteric's own pleasure. A further effect is that the psychical gesture of ruthlessness, in which concern for the other is disregarded in one's own pursuit of pleasurable activity, is curtailed. The permanent neglect of personal desire as a motivation for action leads to a dependence on secondary defences, while a reliance on repression brings desire and denial into a close partnership. The hysterical woman, who would put the well-being of the other before yielding to her own pleasure, thus ends up psychically dependent on the one who is in other ways dependent on her; for only through her care of the other can the hysteric remain alive to the desires she has suppressed in herself. Such hysterical relations run right through the narratives I have studied , giving to them an inevitability,

and an exigency, which demand a psychoanalytic explanation.

When the hysteric ignores conflicting feelings she is effectively aged by them, because their impact is to fix her character into one, ungenerative, position. This effect goes some way toward explaining the phenomenon of brittleness which Freud noted in female patients who, on reaching thirty, discontinue their development. In an early paper on the neuropsychoses of defence, Freud describes this phenomenon in terms of an 'alienation between the psychical and the somatic': and it is as a result of the 'course taken by sexual excitation, [that this alienation] is established more readily and is more difficult to remove in women' (*SE* 3, p.111). Elsewhere, Freud makes the mature woman's psyche analogous to a 'stream whose main bed has become blocked' (*SE 7* p.170). Both these descriptions probe the subtle shift from a defence enacted by the libido against an incursion of external stimulus, to a defence enacted against the libido as it surges up from within. When a psychical defence is used to block the issue of libido from within, brittleness is its outward sign. Both the defence by the libido and the later defence against the libido is a psychical response to danger, even though this fear is anachronistic, for it interprets every intense libidinal onrush as a signal of danger. Besides, such a defence can never cease, for the issue of libidinal feelings within - which for the hysteric is the original source of danger - is ceaseless. The reactively feminine woman, whose psyche is taken up with not attending to a proportion of the stimuli it absorbs, is thus exhausted by the ongoing effort involved ignoring it - hence Nightingale's 'old woman at thirty'.

When Freud encountered this phenomenon in his clinical practice, and speculated on it in 'Female Sexuality' (1931), his prognosis for a cure - over and above the relief of neurotic suffering - was poor. In fact he famously shrugged his shoulders over the question of the whole notion of what I am calling a reactive femininity. This suggests that the problem goes beyond the powers of the therapeutic compass, touching on infantile experiences and social structures which are not always responsive to analysis. Although Freud's comments on the hardening of feminine traits in this late paper begin with the anecdotal, they take a prophetic cast as he warms to the subject:

> I cannot help mentioning an impression that we are constantly receiving during analytic practice. A man of about thirty strikes us as a youthful, somewhat unformed individual, whom we expect to make powerful use of the possibilities for development opened up to him by analysis. A woman of the same age, however, often frightens us by her psychical rigidity and unchangeability. Her libido has taken up final positions and seems incapable of exchanging them for others. There are no paths open to further development; it is as though the whole process had already run its course and remains thenceforward insusceptible to influence - as though, indeed, the difficult development to femininity had exhausted the possibilities of the person concerned. As therapists we lament this state of things, even if we succeed

> in putting an end to our patient's ailment by doing away with her neurotic conflict. (*SE* 22, pp.134-35)

At the age of thirty the young man is commencing his psychical development, while the 'old woman at thirty' is ending hers. In this synopsis of a femininity taken to its logical, hard-bitten extreme, and evokes a Medusa-like figure. Nevertheless he is not the only one to resort to a litany of secondary traits gone wrong to characterize the female condition: Balzac, Tolstoy, and Nightingale are also keen to associate such traits with mature femininity.

A mourning for the loss of a feminine essence which bears no name is, it would seem, the other side of the brittleness which Freud advises one might 'turn to the poets' to find a solution for. While in a young woman the affect of longing is an attractive - often venerated - force, in the mature woman it is just as often a focus of hostility and dread. A reactive femininity results from a wearing away of erotic tensions, and is combined with a turning away from those affective sources - both internal and external - which once enlivened them. As an imaginative foreclosing of erotic potential, it signals the psyche's unwillingness to return to memory traces which first prompted the defence of repression. The feminine brittleness which is the outward sign of a reactive femininity derives not from ignorance, stubbornness, or cowardice, but from the female psyche's avoidance of excitement which alone ensures flexibility and the potential for change. The phenomenon of brittle maturity is thus a psychical response which is ascribed, because of its prevalence, to women; it is not an inherent characteristic of femininity. Only with the compounding effects of time and circumstance can a reactive femininity become characterized as an innate feminine characteristic, expressive of a fixed destiny.

NOTES

1. Honoré de Balzac, 'La Femme de Trente Ans', *Balzac ouvres complètes*, ed. by Marcel Bouteron and Henri Longon (Paris: Louis Conard, 1912), vol.6, p111.
2. May 30 1896, *Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, ed. by Jeffrey M. Masson (Cambridge: Harvard, 1992), p.169.
3. George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, ed. by Barbara Hardy (London: Penguin, 1971), p. 509.
4. Joan Riviere, 'Fear of Breakdown', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, no. 17, 1936, pp.304-20.
5. 'Sofia Kovalevskaya's George Eliot', *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, December 1978, no.33, p.364.

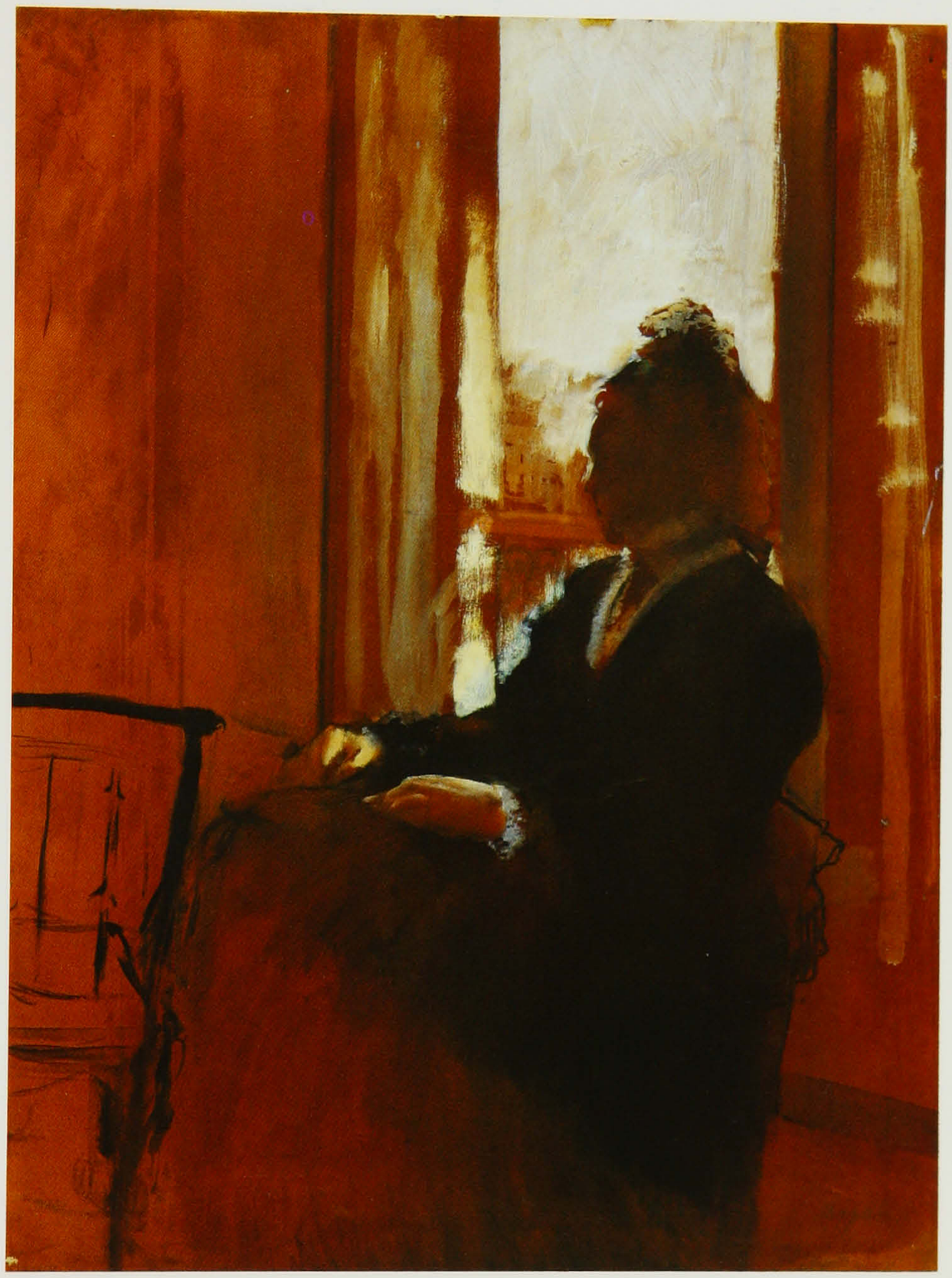

Figure 3 : Edgar Degas, 'A Woman at a Window' (1870-1)

~~Figure 1: Martha Bernays at the time of her engagement to Sigmund Freud (c.1883)~~

END

Degas's painting, 'A Woman at a Window' (1870-71), has a double aspect. The sitter has been traced to a young woman Degas admired and took pity on during the French wars he himself fought in: based on an afternoon's sitting, this painting depicts a cocotte who, on accepting some meat in payment for her time, ate it then and there - raw. The canvas remained in Degas's studio until it was bought by Sickert, who thought it one of the artist's best works, wrongly ignored by critics for being understated and possibly unfinished. On this second level Degas's painting is of no particular woman, but of a woman who sits, against bright light from a window behind, looking into a darkened room. Like Freud's 'A Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria' (1905), in which a single patient exemplifies every female hysteric, Degas's painting captures something common to many nineteenth-century women in this painting. The author too, like Degas, holds up a mirror to the hysteric, capturing in a narrative sequence and a collection of traits those features which, bound up with a particular heroine, rely on and contribute to a general model of the hysteric. The nature of this capture is not mimetic; the authors in this study do not reflect back a hysterical heroine whose 'sitter' may be found in reality. The hysteric is creatively conceived, in important ways, in relation to an implied model, whether in painting, literature, or psychoanalysis. Literature did not make women hysterical rather, through literary narratives, it projectively realized a hysterical heroine who gave coherence and sense to a previously inarticulate distress. It is not that women were unaware of an inner unhappiness until literary representation was given it, more that the elaboration of this unease identified it as a widespread and meaningful condition.

Literature was in the vanguard of making known a feminine unease in the nineteenth century because it was able to bring to life psychical scenarios that reach conscious expression only reluctantly. Unlike Freud's early psychotherapy which was based on the symptoms of neurotic conflict, literature - as an imaginative and not a medical enterprise - was free to speculate on the origins of psychical, and particularly feminine, unrest. Among the authors in this study some were more precocious than others in this respect: Balzac is the most comfortable in the role of psychologist, with perhaps George Eliot a close second. A strong hunch sufficed, for Balzac, as psychological proof; hence his characters speak with remarkable authority on the most intimate aspects of the psyche. It is not wrong-doing which is, for the Curé in 'La Femme de Trente Ans',

the trigger for feminine suffering, rather it is erotic neglect. In conversation with the marchioness, the Curé explains: 'No, madame, you will not die of the sorrow that afflicts you and is written on your features [...] We die not so much from the effects of regrets as from those of disappointed hopes'.[1] The marchioness's malaise derives from the wishes she fails to fulfil, and not from those actions that fill her with remorse. Equally Freud's 'gap in the psyche' stems from the hysterical repression of a libidinal wish, and is memorial to something which never happened psychically - perhaps to a thought that could not be accepted by consciousness - rather than to any retrograde act. Thus it is the dashing of hopes which bear no trace in the marchioness's sorrow that maligns her fortunes most surely.

The power of erotic conflict in the individual psyche has a parallel in the notoriety of the literary romance in the nineteenth century. All the authors represented in this study, with the possible exception of Balzac, sought vehemently to dissociate their work from the genre of romance. Tolstoy, most prominently, denounced the romance for its dissipating effects. Seemingly, the potential for mutual attraction to upset stable psychical defences in one or both partners of a couple, was for him reprehensible. The question of romance besets all these authors, for - in Tolstoy's narratives as in Balzac's - it is the effect of all intense excitement to encroach on the sexual. The enduring appeal of romance is not the story as such, but the mechanisms on which it rests: the influence of romance opens up the psyche both to what the ego most longingly wants to know, and also to what the ego can least afford - in view of the ideals it venerates - to accept. This explains the abiding lure of the heroine Gwendolen Harleth, who upsets all those who draw near her by undermining those defences they rely on to keep temptation at bay. This power is the same one which, within the narrative, compels her downfall. In an impatient rebuttal of her mother's concern, Gwendolen disconcertingly remarks: 'I'm not talking about reality, mamma'.[3] In this comment the heroine communicates how little reality has to do with psychical states that have no external referent, the most intense manifestation of which is that of overwhelming satisfaction or dread. Whether the prospect of a 'once more' of satisfaction is viewed as an invitation, as in Tolstoy's pastoral narratives, or as a threat, as in Brontë's *Villette*, this romantic appeal provides the driving yet invisible force in each of the narratives in this study.

The author, like the hysteric he or she would represent, is engaged in the telling of a story. In undertaking to present the hysteric's story the author has a task beyond that of filling in the narrative gaps which would otherwise mar it. The author is also actively involved in overcoming

those resistances which prevent him or her from elaborating the heroine's story fully. In order to escape the hystericizing potential of inhabiting any single position, the author is required to adopt a number of positions at once. Freud notes this adroitness in 'Creative Writers and Daydreaming' (1908):

> The psychological novel in general no doubt owes its special nature to the inclination of the modern writer to split up his ego, by self-observation, into many part-egos, and, in consequence, to personify the conflicting currents of his own mental life in several heroes. (*SE* 9, p.150)

The author can afford to know what the hysteric cannot admit to consciousness because the author's loyalties are divided among a number of characters. Hence the author's ego, as a result of these peculiar posturings, is never really on the line. Whereas the hysteric reacts to creative impulses within herself as endangering a fragile sense of identity, the author exploits a plurality of viewpoints, and so enjoys - in a vicarious way - apparently incompatible impulses; with, for instance, masculine and feminine aims.

It is the telling of the story, and not the story that is told, that ameliorates hysterical potential. The act of addressing a neutral party, whether reader or therapist, has a healing effect. In Freud's *Studies on Hysteria* this potential is likened to a blood transfusion, 'causing resistance to melt and in thus enabling the circulation to make its way in to a region that has been cut off' (*SE* 2 pp.290-01). This process has the capacity to halt those defences which exact punishment for an ego anxious to maintain control, and to redirect it toward the interests of pleasure. This is neither a mysterious nor a magical procedure, although the hysterical condition and its cure may remain enigmatic until the narrative behind it is brought to the surface. The hysterical character could be said to go through certain experiences on behalf, as it were, of the author. By plunging the literary heroine into intimate relations within a fictional universe, the author is able to represent psychic states which require a dynamic context for their emergence. It could be said that Gwendolen Harleth needed to marry Grandcourt in order, in an otherwise unthinkable way, to be brought to the brink of killing him; likewise Lucy Snowe needed to confront Madame Beck so as to overcome an inhibition against passion; and similarly Masha, in *Family Happiness,* had to wed Sergei in order to distinguish clearly between a marital and a filial relation. All these stories, apart from fulfilling suppressed wishes, enact particular psychical functions: here those of acknowledgement, confrontation, and separation.

What the author finds when he holds a mirror up to the hysteric is no therapeutic solution, such as Freud would later search for with his hysterical patients. Instead the author concentrates on developing a drama which gives sense to the hysteric's dilemma. In so doing the author trips

over, so to speak, the particular idea which produced a dissociation in his or her heroine's mind: for Eugénie Grandet it is the golden case, for Lucy Snowe it is Dr John's love letters, for Nicholas Irtenyev and Masha it is the *Sonaté pathétique*, and for Gwendolen Harleth it is the painted visage behind the sliding doors of the cabinet. As Freud explains in his hysterical case studies, it is the reawakening of a sleeping part of the mind by what he calls an 'auxiliary experience', which contains the promise of a cure (*SE* 2 p.124). Like the Captain in Balzac's 'Adieux', the author possesses the creative capacity to represent the hysterical process. In accepting this challenge the author has a choice: either to sketch the outlines of the hysteric and to allow her inner surfaces to remain vague, as Degas achieves in 'A Woman in a Window' or, like the manipulative captain in Balzac's 'Adieux', to elaborate, in a replicatory and minute way, the entire narrative which lies behind the hysterical position, an aim which risks - when undertaken in a mania of creative enterprise - killing the hysterical heroine outright.

The risks involved in a critical practice which gives significance to hysterical relations within the text are equally great. Such a practice can neither stand nor fall by its general propositions: its value rests on its teasing out of individual narratives according to hysterical precepts, and not on the application of these precepts to individual narratives. Although precepts such as hysterical longing and resistance exist independently of the narrative form, they cannot thrive for long away from it. Hysteria is not in the first instance a theoretical structure; it is an imaginative before it is a clinical phenomena. Like the early hysterics, who insisted on dragging the leg and the hip when struck by paralysis, rather than just the hip, the generally held view of hysteria is not scientific, it is cultural. As long as we remain capable of hysterical identification, of identifying ourselves with pleasures and sufferings not our own, there will always be hysteria, just as there will always be hysterical relations and narratives to relieve ourselves of it. What I am advocating is an approach, not a method; one which is finally independent of a theoretical praxis. The dangers are obvious: the author's intentions may be projected on to a critical paradigm that ends up working more like a funnel than a prism. I cannot recommend this approach unadvisedly; like many psychoanalytically based approaches it is a powerful tool which has as many vices as virtues.

I have been aware at various points of the bold yet tentative critical moves I have made: bold because they bear on important themes, and tentative because it is hard to illuminate them without a floodlight. Like training one's ear for any aesthetic activity, this process takes time to acquire, and inevitably this study shows signs of weaknesses as often as of strengths. I might do it differently and better were I to write this study anew, but I would not write it in another way. If

we employ psychoanalytic concepts in this broader sense, aligning them with narrative mechanisms rather than imposing them on to literature like a grid, there is scope for other psychical phenomenon to be explored in a similar vein. All unsuppressible impulses, once they have found some kind of organization through the workings of narrative, find their way into cultural forms: obsession, jealousy, and depression are all importantly made sense of through the stories and scenarios they give rise to. If we can begin to understand these phenomenon in a singular and minute way, by tracing them through narratives which make no claim to be psychoanalytic, we have a much better chance of comprehending the larger claims on which a psychoanalytic understanding of the mind rests. For instance what really does it mean for Freud to describe hysterical repression, on which the edifice of his theory stands, as a severance of idea and affect; and further to characterize hysterical conversion as a leap from the psyche into the soma? Not to enquire into these questions leaves the hysteric to suffer 'a gap in the psyche', and it is to leave everyone else to experience important gaps in culture.

NOTES

1. Honoré de Balzac, 'The Woman of Thirty', Chapter 2, p.97.
2. George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, ed. by Barbara Hardy (London: Penguin, 1980), p.85.

LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED

A Hysterical Relations

I Primary Texts

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